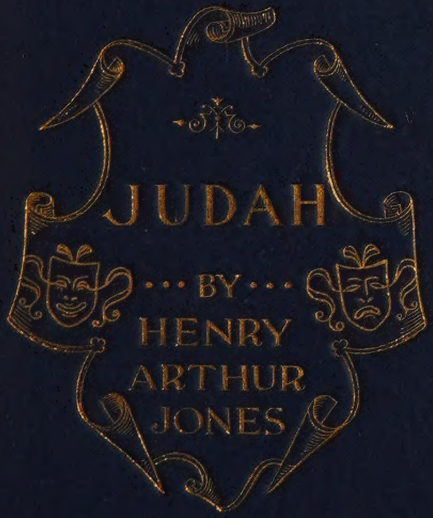

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HENRY
ARTHUR
JONES

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JUDAH

AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

AUTHOR OF "THE TEMPTER," "THE MASQUERADERS," "THE DANCING GIRL," "THE MIDDLEMAN," "THE CRUSADERS," "THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN," ETC.

Played first on the 21st May, 1890, at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, under the management of Mr. E. S. WILLARD and Mr. JOHN LART

New York

MACMILLAN AND CO.

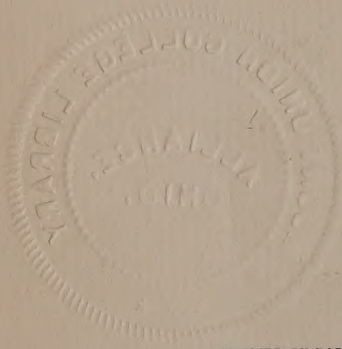
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1894

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CAST OF CHARACTERS AT FIRST PERFORMANCE

The Earl of Asgarby .	*Mr. C. Fulton.*
Professor Jopp, F.R.S., F.L.S., F.G.S., etc. . .	*Mr. Sant Matthews.*
Mr. Prall	*Mr. H. Cane.*
Juxon Prall	*Mr. F. Kerr.*
Mr. Dethic	*Mr. Royce Carleton.*
Mr. Papworthy, Mayor of Beachampton . . .	*Mr. E. W. Thomas.*
Roper	*Mr. H. Harting.*
Morson, Granger, Trustees . .	———. ———.
Judah Llewellyn, Minister of the Welsh Presbyterian Church, Beachampton	*Mr. Willard.*
Lady Eve	*Miss Bessie Hatton.*
Sophie Jopp	*Miss Gertrude Warden.*
Mrs. Prall	*Miss A. Bowering.*
Vashti Dethic	*Miss Olga Brandon.*

ACT I. "SHE IS ALONE THE ARABIAN BIRD."

SCENE. TAPESTRY-ROOM AT ASGARBY CASTLE.

Eighteen days pass.

ACT II. "STAND SENTINEL."

SCENE. THE TERRACE AND OLD NORMAN KEEP, ASGARBY CASTLE.

One year passes.

ACT III. "NOT POPPY, NOR MANDRAGORA."

SCENE. TAPESTRY-ROOM AT ASGARBY CASTLE.

The whole of the action takes place at Asgarby Castle, near the city of Beachampton, in the present day.

PREFACE

THE claim of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's more ambitious plays to rank as literature may have been in some cases grudgingly allowed, but has not been seriously contested. If any doubt existed as to their right to be so considered, the publication consecutively of *Saints and Sinners*, *The Crusaders*, and *Judah* must have set it at rest. As pictures of the English life of to-day, these works have a fidelity at which the dramatists of previous centuries did not always aim, or, at least, a prosperity to which they did not always attain. Some measure of exaggeration or accentuation seems all but indispensable to the dramatic portrayal of comic character. It is as evident in Tony Lumpkin or Bob Acres as it is in Sir Toby Belch or ancient Pistol. Making allowance for this apparent necessity, which springs from conditions in the drama analogous to those attending distemper painting, the characters in the three plays named are as faithful as those

of Balzac, and more easily within our ken ; and the language, whether passionate or humorous, is always appropriate and well chosen. We are not yet far enough away from ourselves to take an absolutely trustworthy and dispassionate view of what are the distinguishing attributes of our age. The fidelity of Mr. Jones's pictures wins, however, hearty and delighted recognition, and the banter of modern aspiration and effort which he supplies is at least happy and convincing to ourselves.

It is convenient, in dealing with *Judah*, to concern oneself only for purposes of comparison or illustration with the two other printed plays. I wish I could include with these *The Dancing Girl*, *The Bauble Shop*, and *The Middleman*, but my remembrance of those plays, though vivid, is neither full nor, I fear, accurate. Practically, *Judah* holds a position between the two works I have associated with it. While inveighing with fierceness against the pharisaical hypocrisy of to-day, and painting the deacon of the conventicle as Colley Cibber, borrowing from Molière, painted the Non-juror of yesterday, Mr. Jones in *Saints and Sinners* still leans to some extent upon those melodramatic devices which made the *Silver King* and *Hoodman Blind* the best and most prosperous works in their

class of the last decade. Captain Eustace Fanshawe, though he is something more, is practically the wicked baronet; Letty Fletcher is, of course, the typical persecuted heroine; and George Kingsmill represents her immemorial protector. The escapade—if such it can be called, seeing that it is involuntary—of Letty links the play closely with melodrama, as it does, I must confess, a little to the detriment of my theory, with the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Letty has much in common with Olivia, and Jacob Fletcher might pass for a dissenting Dr. Primrose. In the development of his story, however, and in the pictures of the deacons, Mr. Jones quitted the old methods for the new, and displayed the satirical intention which has underlain and coloured all his subsequent efforts.

In *The Crusaders* the satirical purpose fights with, if it does not overmaster, the sentimental interest. What dwells in the mind longest is not the love, intense and almost abject, of Philos Ingarfield for the fair and bewitching widow; the devotion, purer and not less absorbing, of Una Dell for the associate in her labours; nor the light-hearted and compromising affection of Dick Rusper for the heroine. We are wholly occupied with the presentation of aristocratic affectations; the pict-

ures of society playing at being charitable and virtuous, and seeking, as it were, without removing its white kid gloves, to wash the feet of the poor. It is not my cue to speak concerning *The Crusaders*, or I would willingly expatiate upon the marvellous truth of what is vital in the plot, and the overpowering fidelity of characters such as Mrs. Champion-Blake and Mr. Palsam—the last-named especially, at once a creation and an actuality, if such a conjunction can be conceived.

Between the two there comes *Judah*, a satire in the main — the satire, primarily, of aristocratic patronage of fads ; and, secondarily, of new forms of social priggishness. Underlying this is a love interest, not in the least melodramatic, but exquisitely human, informing the whole with poetry and passion. In Mr. Jones's later works there are no lay figures. Each character bears the impress of a distinct and recognisable individuality. The nearest approach to a conventional type is perhaps Lord Asgarby, who is necessarily, perhaps—since love for a suffering daughter is scarcely a distinguishing attribute — somewhat colourless. I am not sure that this is not indeed a proof of accurate observation, since in their aspect towards the general public great English noblemen present no

very salient characteristics. Concerning the remaining characters no doubt is possible. Each is a breathing, genuine human being. In the eponymous hero, with his concentrated and almost morbid piety, and his passionate, if fleshly and unhallowed, love for a woman far from fulfilling his moral and intellectual aspirations, the play is linked with *The Crusaders*, and also with *The Dancing Girl*. Judah is, however, carefully differentiated from Philos Ingarfield. Both are visionaries, dreamers, sanguine at the outset of their capacity to alleviate human suffering or elevate human nature. Judah is, however, a mystic, which Philos is not. Like Joan of Arc, Judah hears voices, and like her he has full faith in his mission. In Washti Dethic he sees a miracle-worker—the response, as it were, to his own aspiration after absorption in the Divine. The love and the ambition of Philos Ingarfield are on a lower plane. To him Cynthia Greenslade is a possible earthly spouse. She will help him in his task of mitigating human suffering. She is rich, and she has already shown her disposition so to do. It is as a woman, however, and not as a goddess that he adores her, and his courtship of her is a practical abandonment of duty, which at the beginning that of Judah is not. Philos is

in fact, a socialist ; Judah, a species of cenobite. In both men love means self-sacrifice ; there are few cases, possibly, in which it does not. The self-sacrifice of Judah is, however, self-immolation, which that of Philos is far from being. Both tell lies in order to save the woman they love ; Philos savagely, since there is no other way in which her reputation and honour may be saved. Despising himself for so doing, he lends himself to an act of social hypocrisy and mendacity which must end in his own defeat and humiliation, since—although in the end the heroine comes weeping to his feet and bids him do with her what he will—the prospect in front of him, in case he accepts her and lifts her up, as he will, into his embrace, is joyless, hopeless. With Judah it is otherwise. He has shared deliberately and purposely the woman's fraud, and has rejoiced in her crime as bringing her nearer to him. If the contest with his conscience has been fierce, no less fierce has been his joy in his self-abasement. True, he has determined to reconquer his own self-respect, and raise with him to the spheres the poor, suffering, tormented creature whom he has mistaken for an angel. But the passage upward must be joint. If she will not ascend, neither will he. He will, on

the contrary, go with her where she goes; her people shall be his people, and her God his God. For him, then, a fair chance of happiness is held out. In this respect *Judah*, unlike *The Crusaders*, ends happily.

Vashti Dethic, meantime, is perhaps the most strangely composite character Mr. Jones has created. Her fall from grace and honesty is not, like that of Letty Fletcher, due to masculine baseness and the captured fancy of a girl. An enthusiast in some respects like Una Dell, she is also, when viewed from another point, a somewhat commonplace adventuress. She is in the house of Lord Asgarby for the purpose of preying upon him, after the fashion of her tribe. Some pains are taken at the outset to show the existence of latent possibilities of good. She even tries to believe in her own mission, consciously false and hypocritical as are her methods of prosecuting it. She acts practically under the compulsion of her father, and is weary of the game she plays, and anxious to exchange for healthier air the atmosphere of lies in which she dwells. In this, however there is nothing distinguishing. Above all adventuresses whose story is susceptible of dramatic treatment there is some power hard to oppose — father, hus-

band, brother, lover ; if none of these, there is the hardest taskmaster of all, call it what you will—fate, circumstances, the inevitable logic of events. As for the penitence, sincere or otherwise ; the desire to quit the life of shame, shifts, and dishonour —it is always in the mouth of the impostor. The unfailing vindication and recrimination of the woman of this class finds its most characteristic utterance in *L'Aventurière* of M. Émile Augier. After her detection and humiliation Clorinde turns upon her brother Annibal with the words—

> " C'est toi, toi qui m'as degradée ;
> C'est toi des dons du ciel qui m'as depossédée ;
> Qui m'as séché le cœur, qui m'as mise si bas,
> Que je veux remonter et que je ne peux pas !
> L'injure et le mépris où je me vois sujette,
> O conseiller du mal, sur toi je les rejette !
> Je te hais, te maudis, et je voudrais pouvoir
> Te remplir de ma honte et de mon désespoir ! "

Vashti is incapable of a tirade such as this, having neither the strength of will, the self-reliance, nor the knowledge of the world of her prototype. She is none the less in the same boat. She can plead no excuse of love, nothing higher than ordinary human needs and paternal influence in mitigation of punishment or in excuse of misdeed. Hear

what she finds to say when her falsehood has been detected by the man of all others whose good opinion and love she is anxious to conquer :

"You don't know what my childhood and girlhood were like; how often we were pressed for money. Sometimes we had scarcely bread enough to eat. We went to Spain. I found I was able to cure many of the foolish country people if they only believed in me, and my father *persuaded* me [not compelled me even] if I could only show them that I could live without food it would be a sign of my possessing supernatural power. I began, and it was as he said. I found everybody believed in me. When I had once begun, I was obliged to go on. We came back to England, and then I met you ; and at first I was pleased to see what power I had over you. But when I saw that you believed in me and loved me, I gradually felt how wicked I'd been. I tried again and again to give it up ; I tried to tell you. I wanted you to know the truth about me, and yet I could not bear you to think that I was not worthy of your love. You know it now. Oh ! tell me you forgive me."

Lame as is this excuse, it is all she has to offer ; nor can any casuistry on the part of author, spec-

tator, or reader, find anything more valid. Yet we do not class Vashti Dethic with commonplace adventuresses. Something may perhaps be due to the talent of the first exponent, whose performance of the character brought out whatever in it was elevating or redeeming. To attribute overmuch to this cause would, however, be unjust to the author, who clearly intended to inspire this feeling, and to beget in behalf of his heroine a sympathy that is something more than mere forgiveness. While an unmistakable sinner, Vashti seems indeed of the stuff of which saints are made. She would fain accept her own mission as true ; and her sins, though real, are not specially serious. At the worst she is only carrying out, while in Asgarby Castle, a precept ascribed to the Jesuits, that it is lawful to do evil in order that good may ensue. Byron in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* speaks of Scott's Marmion as

> "Now forging deeds, now foremost in the fight ;
> Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight."

Some similar words—not quite a felon, yet but half a saint—might describe the feeling generally entertained towards Vashti. With her is contrasted Lady Eve, whose frail, clinging, emotional nature

and neurotic temperament, besides serving as foils to Vashti, furnish the best excuse for the fasting girl's crowning deception. Against these three characters, all of them leaning to mysticism, Mr. Jones puts the scientific investigator, with faith in nothing but the seen, admirably illustrated in Professor Jopp. One cannot but admire the justice with which the balance is held. While Dethic—charlatan, conjurer, vulgarian, and, not to put too fine a point upon it, thief—gives birth to Vashti—a girl who, though partner in a fraud, is capable, under the sustaining and inspiring influences of love, of heroic self-immolation approaching to martyrdom ; Professor Jopp—the type of all that is wisest, most enlightened, and most penetrating in modern science—begets a daughter who may be regarded as the most exasperating and hateful product of modern civilisation. That the more responsible and erudite of his *dramatis personæ* should be the special subjects of Mr. Jones's satire is natural, inevitable even. The passion, sublime at once and pitiful, of Judah Llewellyn for the sinful woman whom he shelters, and whose iniquity he shares, lends itself no more readily to irony or humour than does the nervous anxiety of Lord Asgarby for his daughter's health. Indulgence is

the most that is demanded, but sympathy follows necessarily in its wake.

With purely intellectual characters it is otherwise. Upon these Mr. Jones pours out the vials of his wit. Jopp himself is treated with respect, and is shown as honourable, straightforward, and, even in matters in which his scientific conscience and instincts are concerned, not incapable of leniency and generosity. In the wooing of Sophie Jopp by Juxon Prall, Mr. Jones overflows with mirth not unmixed with severity. It is not of course science or erudition that he lashes, but affectation and priggishness.

Here, then, in the satire comes in the species of over-accentuation; it is impossible to deny the dramatist. The serious characters, one and all, are faithful transcripts from real life. Out of the very heart of womanhood Mr. Jones has wrung his Vashti Dethic. Lord Asgarby and Lady Eve are worthy, truthful, and acceptable beings. Judah Llewellyn, mixed Welshman and Jew, is a type of noble purpose and misguided enthusiasm which may be, and often is, encountered, and which commends itself especially to our dramatist. Juxon Prall and Sophie Jopp are in some respects caricatures. They are, however, justifiable as such, and

show the conceivable results to which modern methods and processes tend. A man precisely such as Juxon none of us has seen. Men such as he are, however, a possible outcome of forces known to be at work. "We are none of us infallible, not even the youngest of us," said the Oxford don. The type of man known by painful experience to the utterer of that brilliant witticism is skilfully and legitimately caricatured by Mr. Jones. Just as respect for authority, paternal or other, is unknown to our young men, so regard for modesty is, I am told, fading among our maidens. That a point has been reached at which a woman shall, like Sophie, calmly discuss with the man who proposes to her the physical aspects of marriage, I am not prepared to say. The satire, however, strikes home. It shows what is to be expected, and so fulfils its mission. Satire exactly similar in method, and no whit less accentuated, established the magnificent reputation of *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, and such has again and again opened to the French candidate the gates of the Institute.

I have dealt with the more important characters in *Judah*. Among the minor personages Mr. Prall is interesting as a type of a species the fitness of which for dramatic purposes Mr. Jones has been

one of the first to recognise. He is the disciple, the votary, the interpreter and worshipper of the latest prophet or faddist, the evangelist of the latest craze. Another member of the same fraternity, more comic, but scarcely more zealous, is Mr. Figg in *The Crusaders*, the founder of the Jawle Guild. Not wholly disinterested are these men, each having in his own way a purpose to serve, but they are zealous and thoroughgoing. Mr. Jones is a profound believer in earnestness and enthusiasm. Mr. Palsam, odious as he is, and fond of feeding upon moral garbage, surprises and almost overawes us by his inveteracy of purpose ; and poor Mr. Prabble, the junior deacon at Bethel, almost convinces us that the stores are opposed to Christian morality and dogma. As a type of local fussiness and importance Mr. Papworthy, Mayor of Beachampton, demands a word of praise.

I cannot pretend to have analysed any of the characters in *Judah*, or to have lighted upon any new theory concerning them. I have but given a faint idea of the impression they convey to one mind. Concerning the characters of *Hamlet*, volumes enough to fill the room in which I write have been given to the world without placing it to ourselves in a light much clearer than that in which it

was seen by our ancestors. I am indeed of those who doubt, when a dramatic character is given to the world, whether the very creator knows all the issues to which it is touched. I dwell in the case of *Judah* upon character rather than either plot or dialogue, because it is this which makes a play. Given certain clearly defined characters, and place them in certain circumstances, and the result is, or should be, independent, so to speak, of the volition of the dramatist. From the narrator of a story of modern life, such as all Mr. Jones's recent works, with the exception of *The Tempter*, have been, appropriateness of dialogue and wit—wit reconcilable with appropriateness, that is—are expected. Poetry, except in the nature of the incidents or the relations and emotions of the characters, is out of the question. There is no call for me to deal with the question, "What is or is not permissible in the modern drama?" I am only careful to claim for *Judah* that it is literature, and as such deserves to be accessible in a printed form such as is now assigned it. All drama, not including dramatic poems such as *Festus*, are written for the stage, and are best seen there. From the poorest performance of a Shakespearian masterpiece the most ardent and enlightened scholar learns much that he

will never reach by perusal. We are not, therefore, to deprive ourselves of the privilege of reading and poring over the work at our pleasure, extracting what Rabelais calls its *moelle substantifique*, and deriving a delight perpetually fresh and new from our researches. A work such as *Judah* demands no special research in order to grasp its merits and beauties. There are thousands in the world who may never have a chance of seeing it acted, and may yet profit by its perusal.

As studies of the life around us, its affectations, pretences, frivolities, and also of the deeper feelings that underlie and sweeten it, Mr. Jones's dramas appeal to me more directly than those of most, if not all, of his compeers. The moon to the sea of drama, causing and controlling all its tides, is passion. With the light of this Judah is quickened and thrilled. I know few things that speak more directly to my feelings than the subjugation of the nature of the young dreamer and enthusiast by the sight and touch of Vashti. I am dealing now with the printed volume and not with the performance, well remembered though it be, of the play. If affords, however, curious proof how true a note was struck, that the audience of the first night was electrified after a fashion that, in an

exceptionlly long and close attendance upon theatrical representations, I have rarely seen equalled, and never seen surpassed. As at the first production of *Caste* by Robertson,—a piece wholly different in character, and cognate only in the influence it exercised,—the spectator felt the necessity for some outlet for his admiration and sympathy, and spoke to the stranger near him with no fear of rebuff.

It is a compliment and a gratification to be associated in any fashion with a writer so able, conscientious, and inspired as Mr. Jones. Inspiration is in these days a not too commonly accorded gift. I know not, however, how to refuse it to the man who has shown "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." If I have attempted no exegesis of the work which follows, and have shed on it no light of illumination, I have at least enjoyed the privilege of recording my admiration and regard for the book and its author.

JOSEPH KNIGHT.

ACT I

SCENE. *The Tapestry-room at Asgarby Castle. A handsome apartment hung with Raphael's cartoons in tapestry. The back is covered with a copy in tapestry of the cartoon of the healing of the paralytic at the gate of the Temple. Door up stage right. Fire-place down stage right. Windows opening upon garden up stage left.*

Discover LORD ASGARBY—*a very distinguished-looking man about sixty. He is writing at table.*

Enter ROPER, *announcing.*

ROPER. Mr. Papworthy!

Enter PAPWORTHY.

[*Exit* ROPER.

(LORD A. *rises.*)

PAP. Excuse my taking the liberty, Lord Asgarby, but you being the chief pillar of Beachampton, I thought it my duty to ask your opinion upon the question of our Mr. Llewellyn and this young person.

Enter PROFESSOR JOPP *at window. A man about sixty, keen, alert, intellectual, bald, very high forehead, bright deep-set eyes, genial Voltaire type of face.*

JOPP. Am I in the way?

LORD A. Not at all, Jopp. [*Introduces.*] Mr.

Papworthy. He wants to ask my advice about this young lady who is causing all this sensation in the city.

JOPP. This Miss Dethic?

PAP. Yes, sir. I have been connected with the Durfield Road Chapel since I was a boy, and it seems to me that our young minister, Mr. Llewellyn, is going too far when he declares in public his belief in the miracles that this Miss Dethic is said to work.

JOPP. You don't believe in miracles, Mr. Papworthy?

PAP. Not in England in the nineteenth century. Do you, sir?

JOPP. No. I never believe in miracles that do not happen either in a remote century or a remote country.

PAP. Quite so, sir; and though of course I don't say they are impossible in Beachampton to-day, yet I think as mayor, and as head of one of the oldest establishments in the city, it is my duty to—to—ah —to—

JOPP. To discourage them as much as possible, eh?

PAP. Yes. And Lord Asgarby subscribing very largely to our cause, as he does to everything in Beachampton, I called to ask him whether in his opinion Mr. Llewellyn ought not to be removed.

JOPP. What for? He is tremendously in earnest —the finest natural orator I ever listened to.

PAP. You have heard him, sir?

LORD A. We all went last night. My daughter was deeply impressed, and wished to meet him.

PAP. He's in Asgarby now, with Miss Dethic.

LORD A. In the village? Could you bring him here?

PAP. Certainly, my lord. [LORD A. *rings bell.*] I don't deny Mr. Llewellyn's extraordinary gifts, but it's a pity he's so infatuated with this girl. There are other members of the congregation—my own daughter, for instance—she did knit him a pair of slippers. However, there's no denying the wonderful power he has over the people.

JOPP. He seems to have received a good education.

PAP. He was at our training-college for some years. All our ministers are trained there. But it isn't education with Mr. Llewellyn—it's born in him!

JOPP. Welsh, isn't he?

PAP. A Welsh father and Jewish mother.

JOPP. Celt and Jew! Two good races! Just the man to give England a new religion, or make her believe in her old one.

ROPER *enters.*

PAP. I will try and find him, my lord.

LORD A. Thank you. By the way, you needn't trouble the rate-payers about the Free Library for the city. I will bear the entire cost myself.

PAP. My lord, you are too generous!

LORD A. Generous! What is the use of money to me?

LADY EVE *enters—a girl of fifteen, with beautiful, hectic complexion, feverish, fidgety, with sudden alternate fits of languor and restless energy.* PAPWORTHY *bows very respectfully to her, and she comes to* LORD A. *He kisses her forehead.*

PAP. [*Aside.*] Fifty thousand a year, and one dying child! [*Exit.* ROPER *shows him off.*

LORD A. *watches* LADY EVE *constantly, with the greatest tenderness and solicitude.*

JOPP. Well, Lady Eve, how are you to-day?

LADY E. I am quite well. The doctors are all wrong. I mean to cheat them all and live.

[*Flings herself into an arm-chair, her fingers playing restlessly with a tassel.*

LORD A. Live, dearest? The doctors have never said otherwise.

LADY E. No, but they think it. You need not try to deceive me. I know what these journeys mean, from Torquay to Nice, from Nice to Algiers. [*She rises suddenly, goes to* JOPP *determinedly.* LORD A. *follows her, always with the greatest solicitude.*] Professor Jopp, I read your article in this month's *Modern Review*, on "The Scientific Conception of Truth."

JOPP. You read a great deal too much, Lady Eve.

LADY EVE. I read everything. [*Very pointedly.*] Do you always tell the truth yourself?

JOPP. [*A little taken aback; after a short pause.*] Almost invariably.

LADY E. Will you tell me the truth now?

JOPP. Certainly.

LADY E. How long shall I live?

JOPP. Well, I am not in practice now, you know.

LADY E. [*Goes from him, pettishly, to chair at fireplace, and sits.*] Ah! you all think I am afraid to die! My uncle Jack dashed among the powder barrels at Inkerman, though he knew it was certain death. I am no more a coward than he was. I can die!

LORD A. But you said you were going to live. [*Going to her.*

LADY E. So I am, if you will let me have my own way. [*With great eagerness.*] Will you?

LORD A. My dearest, if there is anything in this world that money can buy, or love can procure, you know it is yours. [*Tenderly.*] What is it?

LADY E. Professor Jopp will laugh.

JOPP. [*Seriously and tenderly.*] I couldn't laugh at anything that promised to bring health to you.

LADY E. You laughed the other day.

JOPP. At what?

LADY E. At this Vashti Dethic. Yet she has made hundreds of cures in Spain.

JOPP. In Spain!

LADY E. And in America.

JOPP. In America!

LADY E. And in England. Mr. Prall has written a book all about her cures and her fasting. [*Very confidently.*] I am sure she could cure me. Father, you won't be angry! Miss Dethic is staying at the Towers with Mrs. Prall, and I have written and asked them to come this afternoon.

LORD A. That's right.

LADY E. And may I ask her to stay here?

LORD A. Certainly, dear, if you wish. [JOPP *shrugs his shoulders.*] She is in the village with this Mr. Llewellyn.

LADY E. Mr. Llewellyn—the minister we heard last night. I'll go and see if I can find her. [*Goes to window.* LORD A. *follows her.*] No, don't come. Oh! If I could speak like him! If I could do something! It's action I want. This world is all for the strong. To do something, and then to die. [*In a very dreamy, musing tone.*] How sweet Death seems sometimes! Like a kiss from an unknown lover! He comes and touches you and says, "Don't you know me? I have loved you all these years. This is our wedding-day. You must come with me. You must come." [*Exit at window.*

LORD A. [*Has watched her with great pain. Comes down, sits at writing-table, head in hands, then bursts into tears.*] I cannot bear it. My dear one!

My only one! The last of us! The end of our race! To have our name written in every page of our country's history, and now to be blotted out. I have followed six of them to the grave, one after another, and now this last one is to be taken. I could buy up half the county, Jopp, and I can't buy a year's life for my only child. I am worth nearly sixty thousand a year, and I am poorer than the poorest labourer that can give blood and vigour to his race.

JOPP. My poor Asgarby!

LORD A. You have changed your beliefs since we were at Oxford together. I haven't! What comfort can your no-creed give me? Is it just?

JOPP. Yes. Your family has played a great part all through English history. It has lived its life, a long and honoured one. My dear Asgarby, when the day's work is done, and well done, why rebel because the night has come and the labourer must go home to his rest?

LORD A. But she has not lived her day. Must it be, Jopp? I do not trust these doctors. They only tell me what they know I am longing to hear. Tell me the truth.

JOPP. With the greatest care, Lady Eve may live some years.

LORD A. How many?

JOPP. It is possible she may outlive you and me, but—

LORD A. But?—

JOPP. You must not build on it.

[*The two men stand with hands clasped for some moments.* SOPHIE JOPP'S *voice heard off at window.*

SOPHIE. [*Off.*] Decidedly—put the girl to a scientific test.

Enter SOPHIE JOPP *at window, in outdoor dress, a dogmatic, supercilious, incisive young lady, with eye-glass and short hair. She speaks in a metallic, confident voice; a girl who could never blush. Goes to chair; sits down.*

Enter at window JUXON PRALL, *a thin, wizened, old-young man, spectacles, sharp features; knows everything—a young man of the most complete self-assurance. Has a peculiar finicking trick of speaking with the tips of the fingers of one hand playing on the tips of the other. Holds his head upon one side, as though he hadn't muscular strength enough to hold it upright.*

JUXON. How do you do, Asgarby? How do you do, Jopp? We have been watching this wonder-worker, Miss Dethic, go through her performance.

LORD A. You don't share your father's belief in her?

JUXON. My dear Lord Asgarby!

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*

LORD A. But Mr. Prall gives scores of authenticated cases in his book.

JUXON. [*With the loftiest contempt.*] My father's book! You've read *that?*

LORD A. With the greatest interest. Why not?

JUXON. Well, naturally I would not deprive my poor father of any small intellectual status that his various lucubrations have left him, but to *me* his book is simply the most deplorable farrago of unsound logic, sickly sentiment, and blatant ignorance that I have ever read. Eh, Miss Jopp?

SOPHIE. The style is certainly flabby.

JUXON. Atrocious. Do you feel inclined to investigate this Miss Dethic's powers, Jopp?

JOPP. [*Shakes his head.*] I have investigated too many of them. The exact point at which self-deception ends and the deception of other people begins has ceased to interest me. I made up my mind when I exposed those rascally spiritualists last year, that I would not waste any more time over such nonsense.

SOPHIE. Oh! but this case does really present some very astonishing features.

JUXON. Quite out of the common. I have proposed a scientific test.

LORD A. Ah! What?

JUXON. Miss Dethic only performs these wonderful cures after some weeks' fasting. She is locked

in a room and remains in a kind of trance. To test if the fast is real, I have proposed that the key of the room should be handed over to me.

SOPHIE. Would it not be better, Mr. Prall, that you and I should take watches of equal duration?

JUXON. I don't think so. I don't question your good faith; but the experience of my entire life has convinced me that my own personal observation is the only instrument whose results are perfectly satisfying and convincing.

LORD A. And did Miss Dethic refuse?

JUXON. My mother objected on the score of propriety. I am extremely desirous not to say anything unfilial, but to *me* my poor mother presents the most alarming spectacle of all that is insufferable and prudish in the British matron. It is simply deplorable.

Enter ROPER, *announcing* MR. *and* MRS. PRALL. *During the following scene* JUXON *gazes at his father and mother with an air of benevolent pity, and occasionally exchanges glances and shrugs of the shoulder with* SOPHIE, *who reciprocates his feelings.*

Enter MR. *and* MRS. PRALL—MR. PRALL *carrying crutches.*

MRS. P. Lord Asgarby, congratulate us. [*Shaking hands with* LORD A.] The most marvellous manifestations!

MR. P. How do you do, Asgarby? [*Shakes hands.*] To-day's results must silence the most obdurate.

JUXON. They will not silence me.

[*Goes to* SOPHIE.

MR. P. [*Looks at* JUXON *angrily; says nothing. Turns to* LORD A.] You remember old Benjamin Bandy?

LORD A. The lame man at the cross-roads?

MR. P. Yes. For the last twenty years he has done nothing but hobble round his garden on crutches.

MRS. P. And swear horribly. And, as he had a remarkably powerful voice, all his neighbours for half a mile round were compelled to listen to him.

JUXON. Not necessarily.

MR. P. [*To* JUXON, *very loudly and angrily.*] It was impossible to avoid hearing him.

LORD A. What about him?

MR. P. Miss Dethic has cured him.

JOPP. Of his bad language?

MRS. P. No, of his complications. He had various disorders.

MR. P. He can walk, Lord Asgarby, as well as you and I. These are his crutches. [*Showing them to* JOPP.]

MRS. P. [*To* JOPP.] You can't deny the crutches.

JOPP. [*Examines the crutches very carefully through glasses; turns them round upside down, as-*

suming an air of conducting a profound examination and then delivers his verdict very magisterially.] They *are* crutches.

[PRALL, *with a satisfied air, crosses to table and puts crutches on it.*

MRS. P. And what have you to say to that?

JOPP. That apparently Miss Dethic has set free an alarming quantity of bad language to perambulate the country, instead of confining it within the limited radius of half a mile of the cross-roads.

Enter ROPER, *announcing* MR. PAPWORTHY *and* MR. LLEWELLYN. *Enter* PAPWORTHY. *Enter* JUDAH LLEWELLYN, *about twenty-five, dark complexion, shaggy, clustering hair in thick curls over his forehead. Quick, nervous step; glowing, enthusiastic manner. Slight Welsh accent which becomes more noticeable in excitement.*

PAP. My lord, this is Mr. Llewellyn. If you'll excuse me, my lord—[*Taking out watch*]—I have a meeting. [*Exit.*

JUDAH. [*Bows very slightly.*] You sent for me.

LORD A. We had the pleasure of hearing you last evening. We were delighted.

JOPP. I have to speak in public occasionally. I should like to know the secret of your oratory.

JUDAH. I believe what I say.

JOPP. *I* believe what *I* say. There must be some other reason.

JUDAH. What do you speak about?

JOPP. My last lecture was on tadpoles and lizards.

JUDAH. Mine was on the unseen world.

JOPP. [*Dryly.*] Ah!—there I can't follow you.

JUDAH. It does need wings.

JOPP. And I have only legs. Was that a personal experience of your own that you told us of last night? Those mysterious voices—

JUDAH. Yes; I hear them almost every day. I have heard them ever since I was a child and kept my father's sheep on the hills in Wales. You know I lived almost alone until I was nearly twenty. I saw no human being, sometimes spoke to no one, from one week to another.

JOPP. And you fancy that you hear a real voice at these times?

JUDAH. It is not fancy—I hear it as plainly as I hear yours. [JOPP *smiles.*] Why do you doubt me? Is the spirit-world so far from you that you don't believe in it? It's nearer to me than this earth I walk upon.

LORD A. I understood that this Miss Vashti Dethic was with you, Mr. Llewellyn.

[*At the mention of her name* JUDAH'S *face shows intense interest.*

JUDAH. I left her in the village.

MRS. P. I was bringing her here, but she would

insist on trying her marvellous curative power on some poor people in the village.

MR. P. Wonderful! I am just bringing out a new edition of my book on her cures—the seventeenth!

JUXON. Perhaps you will correct a few of the gross inaccuracies that appear in the previous editions.

MR. P. [*Terribly upset, with an outburst of impotent wrath.*] Juxon! [*Suddenly recovers himself. Speaks in a tone of condescending sarcasm.*] I decline to argue with you, sir.

JUXON. [*Imperturbably.*] My dear father, I would not force you to such an unequal contest.

Enter ROPER, *announcing* MR. DETHIC. *Enter* MR. DETHIC, *a suave, furtive, sallow, oily man of about fifty with a touch of the manner of a second-rate platform orator.*

MR. P. Lord Asgarby, may I present Mr. Dethic, the father of our distinguished guest?

LORD A. We are pleased to see you, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. I hope you'll excuse my intruding, my lord, but my poor child—

JUDAH. Miss Dethic is not ill?

DETHIC. Merely exhausted. She is resting in the grounds for a few moments.

MRS. P. And the young girl with the fits?

DETHIC. Perfectly cured, and so grateful. Wanted to give us a testimonial on the spot.

MR. P. What do you say to these occurrences, Professor?

JOPP. I have not witnessed them.

MR. P. You don't deny them?

JOPP. We don't deny miracles nowadays, Mr. Prall—we explain them.

JUDAH. Explain!—what?

JOPP. The perfectly natural means by which miracles are always accomplished.

JUDAH. You know the secrets of life and death, then? You hold the keys of the grave? Explain?! Explain to the mother the mystery of the love that gives a living child to her arms! Explain to the husband what hand snatches back his wife from the gates of death! Explain?! They do not need it. They hold their dear ones to their hearts—safe. They do not question—they love.

LORD A. [*who has listened eagerly.*] We hoped Miss Dethic would have been here.

JUDAH. Will you let me bring her to you?

LORD A. If you will be so kind.

JUDAH. I will fetch her.

DETHIC. [*Comes up to* LORD A., *his manner oily, uneasy, underbred.*] My lord, may I express my overwhelming sense of the honour you have done me to welcome me under the hospitable roof of Asgarby Castle?

LORD A. [*Bows.*] We hear wonderful accounts of Miss Dethic's powers.

DETHIC. Not half the truth, my lord.

JOPP. So I should imagine!

DETHIC. [*Turns sharply round on* JOPP.] Sir!

JOPP. In placing the proportion of truth to rumour at one half, you have formed an unusually favourable estimate of human nature, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. [*Confused; laughs slightly.*] Oh—ah! Yes! Possibly, sir, you have never met with anyone possessing these extraordinary powers.

JOPP. [*In the gravest, most matter-of-fact tone, looks* DETHIC *full in the face, and speaks without showing the least irony.*] Never, Mr. Dethic. I have in my little collection at home the liver-wing of a phœnix, the entire skeleton of a griffin in excellent preservation, and the only known specimen of the horn of a unicorn, but I have never met with any one possessed of supernatural powers.

DETHIC. Indeed! [*Laughs; rather confused. Then, aside.*] He's chaffing me!

ROPER *enters rather suddenly.*

ROPER. I beg pardon, my lord. The young lady has fainted.

[MRS. P., LORD A., *and* MR. P. *go off, followed by* ROPER. JOPP *stands at fire-place.*

DETHIC. [*To* JUXON, *who ignores him.*] My poor darling! It's ever the same when she is labouring for the good of others.

Re-enter JUDAH, *bearing* VASHTI *in a swoon.*

VASHTI *has a very pale, saintly, beautiful face. He carries her with the utmost tenderness, and shows great concern. He is followed into the room by* LORD A. *and the* PRALLS.

JUDAH. [*Brings her down stage.*] She is ill! She is dying! [*To* DETHIC.] You shall not let her waste her strength any more. She is killing herself. [*Places her on settee.*] Miss Dethic!

JOPP. I have some medical knowledge. Can I be of any use?

DETHIC. [*Intercepts* JOPP.] Not at all. Pardon me; she prefers to be left alone. [JOPP *turns away.*] My lord, will you be so kind as to leave her with me?

LORD A. By all means. You are sure there is no danger?

DETHIC. Nothing serious; it will soon pass off.

[SOPHIE *and* MRS. P. *going off at window.* PRALL *has been taking notes in a pocket-book.*

MR. P. A few notes for my next edition.

JUXON. I must really beg you to correct those inaccuracies, sir.

[*Exeunt* JUXON *and* PRALL. LORD A. *beckons* JOPP *and goes off.*

JOPP. [*Aside, as he crosses to window.*] Father—genus, cheat; species, religious; variety, bogus-miracle business. Daughter—hum! [*Exit.*

VASHTI *opens her eyes.*

JUDAH. [*Looking at her.*] You are better?

VASHTI. Yes. How good you are to me!

JUDAH. You are trembling still—you can hardly breathe.

DETHIC. Mr. Llewellyn, my poor child will recover more quickly if she is left alone with me.

JUDAH. It is my fault. I have encouraged her to use these powers, and now her strength is failing.

VASHTI. No, I am better; leave me for a few moments.

[JUDAH *gives her a look, then exit at window after the others. They watch him off.*

DETHIC. Splendid, my darling. I'm proud of you. By Jove, we're in clover at last! The old fellow here is worth goodness knows how much a year, and throws it about as if it was pebbles, and the young lady that wrote to Mr. Prall is his only child. All the others have died, and he's ready to give his head to keep her alive. Now, my dear, do play your cards well, and our fortunes are made for life.

VASHTI. I'll go no further.

DETHIC. What?

VASHTI. I'm tired of it. I hate this deception. I'll have no more of it.

DETHIC. Hush now! Take care, my angel girl, take care! You surely won't refuse to cure the poor young lady?

VASHTI. Cure her?

DETHIC. Yes, darling. You do cure people, you know.

VASHTI. They get well—sometimes.

DETHIC. My darling, what more can any doctor in the country say of his patients?

VASHTI. It's only the ignorant and uneducated who believe in me. They think I have some mysterious power.

DETHIC. So you have. Take my word for it, my darling, there's some sort of magnetic influence about you that you don't quite understand yourself.

VASHTI. Sometimes I think there is, but then again I doubt myself. You're sure I have this power—it is *I* who cure them?

DETHIC. Quite sure, my darling. You couldn't have been successful in so many scores of cases if there hadn't been something in it.

VASHTI. Then let us trust to that alone, and give up this pretence of fasting.

DETHIC. You can't, my dear. We've always given out that the fasting is the secret of your power, and people look for it. The general public are such fools. They'll never let you do 'em good in a plain, honest, straightforward way. You're bound to deceive 'em for their own good. We must throw 'em the fasting in. Mr. Prall has written a book about it, and laid special stress upon it.

VASHTI. Mr. Prall is deceiving himself and his readers.

DETHIC. Just so, my dear. Mr. Prall is a fool—that's the reason he's been of such use to us. And his readers are fools—that's the reason his book has had so many editions. It's ungrateful to repine at Providence for having made the world so full of fools, when it's quite plain they are put here for our especial benefit.

VASHTI. If I should be found out, who would be the fool then?

DETHIC. Found out?! Nonsense!

VASHTI. You might not be able to supply me with food.

DETHIC. My precious angel, you trust to your old father. I didn't spend twenty years in the conjuring business without keeping a trick or two up my sleeve in case of accident.

VASHTI. I will not do it. It's shameful! It's wicked! I would never have begun it if I had known it would come to this, but you led me on step by step, and now I hate myself. Oh! what am I?—what am I? [*With bitter self-reproach; then turns suddenly round on him.*] Make some excuse to these people. I will not stay to trick and lie to them.

DETHIC. [*Intercepting her and catching her hands, looking straight in her eyes.*] Oh yes, you will, my dear!

VASHTI. [*Very firm.*] I will not.

DETHIC. Oh yes, you will. [VASHTI *turns from him; he drops her hands.*] What's the reason of this

change, Vashti? There's some reason for it. What is it?

VASHTI. [*After a pause.*] The people believe in me.

DETHIC. Well, don't you want them to believe in you?

VASHTI. [*Softly.*] Mr. Llewellyn believes in me.

DETHIC. Mr. Llewellyn? Oh-h-h! It's Mr. Llewellyn, is it?

VASHTI. I will not do it. [*Very determinedly.*]

DETHIC. [*Venomous and quiet.*] Look here, my girl. Either you stay on here, and act according to my instructions, and are rewarded with a happy and honoured competence for the rest of your life, or you confess yourself a fraud, disgrace your trusting old father, and let Mr. Llewellyn know exactly what you are, besides getting yourself lodgings inside Beachampton jail.

VASHTI. [*Frightened.*] Jail!

DETHIC. The palatial red-brick edifice overlooking the canal.

VASHTI. [*Very frightened.*] I have done nothing criminal, have I?

DETHIC. Haven't you? How about imposing on dear, kind, good Mr. and Mrs. Prall, and living on 'em, and obtaining money of 'em on false pretences?

VASHTI. Obtaining money?

DETHIC. I've borrowed a hundred pounds of Mr. Prall. [VASHTI *shows alarm.*] Oh, you've had

your share. Everything you've got on came out of it.

VASHTI. [*Deeply ashamed.*] You told me he gave it you.

DETHIC. So he did, so far as there's any chance of his getting it back. But up to the present he regards the transaction as a loan. [VASHTI *is overcome with shame.*] Come, Vashti, don't be a fool. You can't go back now. [JUDAH *enters at window.*] I was just trying to persuade her, Mr. Llewellyn, that it is her duty to stay here and cure this poor young lady if she can. I was asking her to remember what you said : "Squander your life to save it ; save it, and find that you have lost it after all." [*Turns to* VASHTI.] You will stay here, Vashti, won't you ? You'll stay ? [*Looks threateningly.*

VASHTI. [*After a pause.*] Yes, I'll stay.

DETHIC. That's right, my dear. I'll tell his lordship. [*Goes to window, and exit.*

JUDAH. [*Very much embarrassed.*] Miss Dethic.

VASHTI. Yes ? [*Looks at him.*] What is it, Mr. Llewellyn ?

JUDAH. I want to speak to you.

VASHTI. [*Pause.*] Why don't you speak ?

JUDAH. Because—I can't !

VASHTI. You can be eloquent enough when you choose.

JUDAH. I am afraid to speak to you. Your goodness, your purity, take my breath away.

[VASHTI *shows a stab of pain at deceiving him,*

then shows pleasure at his confession of admiration. Her face glows as he proceeds.

JUDAH. [*Looking at her with the deepest reverence, approaching her.*] You are like the picture of the angel that my mother hung over my head when I was a child. I can't speak to you as I do to others. [*Breathless.*] I want to kneel and worship you.

VASHTI. How can you speak so? You do not know me. You are mistaken in me. Oh, why do you think so well of me! Can't you see that I have a thousand faults? Indeed, indeed, I am no better than other women.

JUDAH. It is your goodness makes you say that.

VASHTI. I am not good.

JUDAH. How is it, then, that you have this strange power over evil? What is it but your goodness that frightens disease from its hold? See what you have done to-day? But you fly from your own good deeds. You will not hear the blessings of those whom you have healed and comforted. I hear them. I treasure them. I know what they cost you. It is your own life and health you give to others. This afternoon you fainted. I want to ask you to spare yourself, to waste your strength no more.

VASHTI. I am better now — quite well. You would wish me stay here and try and do this young lady good?

JUDAH. I would not have you injure your own health.

VASHTI. But if I promised you that this should be the last time,—that, succeed or fail, I will try no more,—would you not have me do it then?

JUDAH. Yes, I would.

VASHTI. Then I will do this, and for your sake it shall be for the last time.

JUDAH. Thank you.

VASHTI. But oh! Mr. Llewellyn, you must not think so well of me. You don't know me. I am not an angel, I am a *woman.*

Enter DETHIC *at window.*

DETHIC. [*Oily, balmy.*] Quite recovered, my precious? [VASHTI *shows intense disgust at her father's tone.*] That's right. [*Calls off.*] My lord, my poor child is now perfectly restored.

Enter LORD A. *and* LADY E.

LADY E. [*Excitedly, speaking as she enters.*] Where is she? Introduce me! Never mind, I'll introduce myself. [*Going to* VASHTI, *taking her hands.*] You are Vashti Dethic? I have heard so much of you. Is it true you have this wonderful power?

Enter JOPP *at window. He pauses, and looks at* DETHIC.

VASHTI. I think I have been the means of restoring some people to health.

LADY E. Can you cure me?

VASHTI. Will you let me try?

LADY E. Yes. There is something in the touch of your hand. I feel you have done me good already. You must stay with us now.

VASHTI. If Mrs. Prall can spare me.

LADY E. She must! [*Turns to* LORD A.] Then that's settled, isn't it?

LORD A. I shall be only too pleased—if convenient to Miss Dethic.

DETHIC. Quite, my lord. Quite, I assure you. [*Showing great satisfaction.*

LADY E. I will go and tell Mrs. Prall we are going to rob her of you. I shall soon be well now.

LORD A. [*Kisses her, shows great affection.*] My dearest!

LADY E. [*Standing at window.*] Doesn't she look like a saint? [*Aside to* LORD A.] Perhaps she is one.

LORD A. If she cures you she is.

[*Exit* LADY EVE *at window.*

DETHIC. [*After a little humming and hawing.*] My lord, do I understand that I am included in your lordship's kind invitation to Asgarby Castle?

LORD A. Certainly, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Thank you, my lord. My dear child will lay down her life for Lady Eve, if necessary.

JOPP. How can that be necessary?

DETHIC. Well, you see, she is quite unable to

perform these great cures without fasting for weeks, and she is like a dead creature afterwards.

JUDAH. [*Very emphatically to* VASHTI.] You shall not do it.

DETHIC. Of course we don't expect any reward. Still, if any trifling way of showing your gratitude should suggest itself—

[VASHTI *rises as if to stop* DETHIC.

LORD A. If your daughter is the means of benefiting Lady Eve, there is nothing you can ask me for, even to the half of all I have in the world, that I will not readily give you.

VASHTI. [*Emphatically.*] I will take nothing.

LORD A. I shall insist on making some return. There is surely something that you wish for?

VASHTI. No, nothing. [*Glancing at* JUDAH.] Yes, there is something.

LORD A. What is it?

VASHTI. May I mention it to you alone?

LORD A. Certainly. [*Taking her down stage.*

VASHTI. You have heard Mr. Llewellyn. He is spending all his life in doing good. You do not know how great a work he is doing. If Lady Eve is well in a year from now, will you build him a new church, a place worthy of him and the truths he speaks? This is the only thing I will take from you.

LORD A. If my child's life is spared, in memory of her restoration I will raise a monument; it shall

be the most beautiful church in Beachampton, and I will endow the minister with any income that you may ask.

VASHTI. Thank you! Thank you with all my heart. You will not let him know. He would not accept it.

LORD A. He shall not know.

JOPP. May I ask, Miss Dethic, what is the precise nature of the cure you propose to work upon Lady Eve?

VASHTI. That is my secret.

JOPP. Mr. Llewellyn, perhaps you can explain Miss Dethic's method.

JUDAH. Miss Dethic fasts for several days, and a strange unearthly power comes to her, which gives her strength not her own, to convey to those whom she desires to heal.

JOPP. I don't quite follow the operation. So far from giving strength, any lengthened period of fasting must weaken.

JUDAH. It weakens the body, but it gives beauty and strength to the spirit. [JOPP *shakes his head.*] Why should it seem strange to you? Can you not see that Miss Dethic is not as others?

JOPP. Evidently. [*To* DETH.] Does she abstain from all kinds of food?

DETHIC. Absolutely. [JOPP *whistles incredulously.*

VASHTI. You do not believe that I fast?

JOPP. My dear young lady, I always believe what's told me.

DETHIC. But you whistled!

JOPP. Yes, I did whistle. [*Pause.*

JUDAH. Do you deny her gifts?

JOPP. I have no opportunity of judging.

JUDAH. Inquire of those whom she has cured. They can testify to her powers.

JOPP. Fifteen years ago, sir, I analyzed a patent pill. It was composed of harmless, drastic, and poisonous drugs in about equal proportions. The patentee had made a fortune out of it, and thousands of his victims had given him testimonials.

JUDAH. Well?

JOPP. Since then the patentee has made another fortune, and a thousand more victims have given him testimonials.

JUDAH. Miss Dethic has submitted herself to every proof that can be offered to her.

JOPP. Not to mine.

[*Slight pause.* JUDAH *looks at* VASHTI, *and makes an action as if asking her to speak.*

VASHTI. [*Comes down to* JOPP.] Will you put me to your proof, sir?

JOPP. [*Rises very quietly.*] Is it a challenge?

VASHTI. As you please.

JOPP. Um! [*Aside to* LORD A.] You mean this young lady to remain at the Castle?

LORD A. Yes; Eve wishes it, and I wish it.

JOPP. And it is with your consent that she treats Lady Eve in some mysterious, occult way?

LORD A. If you had but one child, and you loved her as I love Eve, you would listen to every quack and charlatan that promised to give her a few months' life.

JOPP. But your physicians?

LORD A. I've no faith in them. They gave me hopes of the others to the very last, and they all died. Do as you please; I leave this matter in your hands.

JOPP. You wish me to act for you?

LORD A. Yes, only, whatever you do, let Eve have her own way in everything.

JOPP. [*To* VASHTI.] You propose to cure Lady Eve in your usual manner—by fasting?

VASHTI. Yes.

JOPP. You are willing for me to test the reality of your fast?

VASHTI. Have I not said so?

JOPP. You allow me to impose my own conditions?

VASHTI. Impose what conditions you please.

DETHIC. At the same time I must warn you that a habit of doubting, an atmosphere of unbelief, does very materially interfere with a—a—

JOPP. With the success of miracles. Yes, I've noticed that. Asgarby, are the rooms in the old keep, the tower-rooms, occupied now?

LORD A. No, they remain as they were in my father's time.

JOPP. May I use them?

LORD A. Certainly.

JOPP. Thank you. [*To* VASHTI.] There are three very delightful rooms in the old keep. They are quite modern. The late Lord Asgarby had them fitted up for his scientific library. Have they been occupied recently?

[DETHIC *and* VASHTI *show keen attention.*

LORD A. Yes, when we were in Algiers last year, Roper lived in the keep, and the jewels were kept there, so I had a new safety lock put on the outer door.

JOPP. How many keys are there to that lock?

LORD A. Only one.

JOPP. Only one! That will do! [*To* VASHTI.] I shall confide you to my daughter. I shall give her that key, and she will take care that you have all the liberty consistent with—consistent with our watching you most thoroughly.

VASHTI. I may see my father sometimes?

[JOPP *looks curiously at* DETHIC, *who tries to look sublimely unconcerned, but fails. Shuffles, and looks rather uncomfortable.*

JOPP. [*After having taken stock of* DETHIC *for some time.*] H'm-m! Well, perhaps sometimes.

DETHIC. It's of no consequence.

JOPP. And we begin, shall we say, to-morrow morning?

VASHTI. This afternoon—at once.

JOPP. [*Aside, puzzled.*] Now is that girl really humbugging herself—or is she trying to humbug me? I'll give myself the benefit of the doubt.

Enter from window LADY EVE *with* MRS. PRALL, *followed by* PRALL.

LADY E. [*Excited, restless, flies to* VASHTI.] Miss Dethic, Mrs. Prall says you can stay with me from now, so you are my prisoner. [*Sits beside her on settee.*

JOPP. Excuse me, Lady Eve, for the next three weeks Miss Dethic is my prisoner.

LADY E. What do you mean?

JOPP. Miss Dethic invariably fasts before curing her patients, and as she wishes us to be quite sure that her fasting is genuine, she has kindly asked me to put her to the test.

JUXON. Allow me to suggest, Jopp, that my test would be—

JOPP. Thank you, Mr. Prall. I shall employ my own test, and I am pretty certain about the result.

JUDAH. Won't you wait until you've obtained the result?

JOPP. You're right. I spoke too soon.

DETHIC. Quite so. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

JOPP. Pardon me. The proof of the pudding is in the digestion.

LADY E. But I may see Miss Dethic?

JOPP. Certainly, as often as you wish.

VASHTI. As you are to be my jailer, perhaps you will kindly tell me your name.

JOPP. My name? [*A sudden monosyllable like the effect of a little pistol shot.*] JOPP!

DETHIC. Jopp! [*Shows a sudden shock of surprise, as though he were shot, but quickly recovers.*

VASHTI. [*Looks at* JOPP. *By an immense effort does not betray herself. Very faintly.*] Professor Jopp?

JOPP. You've heard of me.

VASHTI. The Professor Jopp who exposed the spiritualists last year?

JOPP. The same Professor Jopp.

DETHIC. [*Having perfectly recovered, comes down to* JOPP *and offers hand.*] My dear sir, let me shake you by the hand; I'm proud to think my dear child has an opportunity of convincing the world-renowned Professor Jopp of her extraordinary powers.

JOPP. [*Takes no notice of his proffered hand.*] That's exactly what my spiritualist friend said to me last year. Poor beggar! I signed a petition to the Home Secretary the other day to get him out of jail.

VASHTI. You sent him to jail?

JOPP. No; his own cleverness did that. I'm trying to get him out.

VASHTI *looks frightened at him.*

JOPP. What's the matter?

VASHTI. Nothing—nothing!

JOPP. You still agree to submit to my test?

VASHTI. Yes, yes—have I not said yes? Put me to whatever test you please.

JUDAH. You hear, sir! Miss Dethic is in your hands! Try her! Lay snares! Set traps for her! You have no juggling trickster to deal with now! The power she serves stands ready to vouch for her, and your own lips shall be the witness of her truth and goodness to all the world.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE. *The conservatory and terrace. A conservatory outside the castle, opening on to the terrace, which runs along back of stage, and shows a flight of old stone steps with a crumbling wall on each side, covered with ivy, and overhung with the tops of the trees; a suggestion of considerable depth below. The steps lead up to the old castle keep A doorway with a window over it. Beside the window a stone seat cut deeply into the wall, with steps leading on to the ramparts. This seat is large enough to conceal a man. Bright lamp in the conservatory, with wicker chairs and table on stage. A flood of summer moonlight on the old keep. Door opening from rooms in the castle. A light burning in window at the gate tower. An old Norman arch, ivy-covered, with door on right of stage. Piano is being played off stage and some one is singing; this at suitable intervals during the act until* LADY EVE'S *entrance. When curtain rises* JUDAH *comes from warder's seat in recess to top of the steps; looks up at window of keep; then after a pause he sees* DETHIC. *He then retires into the recess, and is hidden.*

Enter DETHIC *along terrace in evening dress, as if just coming from dinner. He enters very cautiously, looking behind him to see if he is followed. Creeps cautiously on to terrace and looks up at the keep; whistles up towards gate-tower as if desirous of attracting the attention of some one within.*

DETHIC. [*On terrace at bottom of the keep steps. Looks cautiously round, takes out a very large new key from pocket.*] They're all pretty safe: the men in the dining-room, the ladies in the drawing-room. I've a good mind to risk it. [*As if carelessly, but really looking all round to see if he is observed, opens the Norman gateway door; looks out; shuts it. Is about to go up steps, his back being towards the left.*

SOPHIE, *in evening dress, enters through conservatory.*

SOPHIE. Mr. Dethic!

DETHIC. [*Turns round, confused.*] Er—you've left the drawing-room rather quickly, Miss Jopp!

SOPHIE. You've left the dining-room *very* quickly, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Yes. I'm so fond of nature. Now that scene! [*Flourishing his right hand over the moonlit landscape, and calling* SOPHIE'S *attention to it, while his left hand is putting the large key into his coat-tail pocket. He is standing with his back to audience, so this action is very distinct.*] To me there is something very sweetly mysterious about all that.

[*He has secreted the key.*

SOPHIE. The most sweetly mysterious thing to me, Mr. Dethic, is that your daughter should have looked so well without food until a few days ago.

DETHIC. Ah, you see, Miss Jopp, we have stood the ordeal and come out unscathed.

SOPHIE. There are three days longer yet!

DETHIC. But eighteen days have gone by without one morsel to her lips.

SOPHIE. [*Stares straight at him.*] Eh, Mr. Dethic?

DETHIC. You've kept the strictest watch over her all day. You've locked her up there all night, and you've never allowed the key of the tower rooms to pass for a moment out of your possession.

SOPHIE. No.

DETHIC. You have it now?

SOPHIE. [*Produces from pocket a key exactly the same in shape as the one* DETHIC *has put into his.*] There it is. [*Holds it up so that the audience can distinctly see the likeness between the keys.*

DETHIC. With that key in your possession you cannot entertain the least suspicion of our good faith.

SOPHIE. You see the window to the tower-room? [*Pointing up to the window which is lighted.*

DETHIC. Yes. The room where my dear child is imprisoned.

SOPHIE. That window was nailed up by my father's orders.

DETHIC. So that no food could possibly come through that way.

SOPHIE. Just so. Except that last Saturday I discovered that one of those little panes would take out, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. You don't say so? But you can't suppose that food could be conveyed through one of those panes at that distance? It's—it's really too absurd.

SOPHIE. It is absurd; yet, absurd as it is, your daughter's health and spirits, which had kept up precisely as if she were being fed, declined from the very day that my father and I had a wire-gauze put over the window, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. [*Affecting astonishment.*] A wire-gauze!

SOPHIE. You hadn't noticed, perhaps.

DETHIC. [*Telling a good, solid lie.*] No.

SOPHIE. Strange! And what is also strange is that since last Saturday your daughter has shown every symptom of starving! [*Accidentally raises her voice a little, and speaks the word in such a tone that it can be heard by* JUDAH.

DETHIC. Starving!

SOPHIE. [*In an unconcerned tone.*] Yes; absurd, isn't it? I'm just going to her.

DETHIC. Shall we escort her to the drawing-room? Yes, I think we will! [*With great eagerness, going towards* SOPHIE.

SOPHIE. No, I think we won't! [DETHIC'S *face falls very much.*] At least not till my father comes from the dining-room. But Miss Dethic can walk along the terrace here, if—

DETHIC. [*Again delighted.*] Yes, if—

SOPHIE. If you'll be good enough to keep at the other end of it.

DETHIC. [*Again shows great disappointment.*] Oh, by all means. [SOPHIE *goes up steps—takes out her key. Aside.*] Oh, you duck! [*Shakes his fist at her as she goes up steps.*

SOPHIE. [*Suddenly turns round; nearly catches him in his threatening attitude. He drops it, tries to look unconcerned.*] Eh?

DETHIC. Eh?

SOPHIE. You spoke?

DETHIC. No, no; merely thought out loud. The dining-room windows are open, I see. I'll rejoin his lordship.

[SOPHIE *goes to the top of steps and opens the keep door.* DETHIC *makes a grimace at her and goes off along terrace.*

SOPHIE. [*Calling.*] Miss Dethic! [VASHTI, *in white, comes to the keep door. A marked difference from the last act; very haggard and weak, but with an expression of fixed endurance.* JUDAH *looks down from the warder's seat and listens.*] I hope you are better.

VASHTI. [*At top of steps.*] I am quite well. Why do you always ask so anxiously after me?

SOPHIE. I was afraid you might not be able to hold out three days longer.

VASHTI. You needn't fear.

SOPHIE. Would you like to walk on the terrace for a little while?

VASHTI. Yes. [*Comes down. With forced cheerfulness.*] What a lovely night! I could dance with delight.

[*Runs quickly past* SOPHIE *with affected gaiety. Stops exhausted at bottom.*

SOPHIE. Ah! You're playing a very foolish game.

VASHTI. [*Nettled, proud, draws herself to her full height.*] I'm playing no game, except with death, for dear Lady Eve's life, and I shall win. [SOPHIE *shrugs her shoulders.*] You think I am cheating you.

SOPHIE. No, I think you are cheating yourself. I shall be at the end of the terrace with your father, so you are quite free for the time.

[*Exit along terrace after* DETHIC. VASHTI *watches her off.* JUDAH *watches her also, and comes down steps gradually.*

VASHTI. [*Sinks into seat. Aside.*] Why doesn't my father bring me something? If there were any berries—anything to stop these wolves that gnaw me! Why shouldn't I give in? And let Mr. Llewellyn know me for what I am? No, I dare not! I'll starve to death before he shall think me a cheat. Besides, am I a cheat? I do not willingly deceive them.

JUDAH. [*Has come down steps behind her.*] Miss Dethic.

VASHTI. [*Turning with great surprise.*] Mr. Llewellyn! How did you get here?

JUDAH. I climbed up from the moat.

VASHTI. From the moat? [*Looks over the parapet; shudders.*] How could you do such a dangerous thing? You might have been killed.

JUDAH. You forget; I was a shepherd all my youth. Before I was twelve I climbed the side of a mountain three times as high as this for a bird's nest.

VASHTI. Three times as high as this!

JUDAH. I was dared to do it. I brought the young ones down to the ground, and when I heard the mother crying for them, I climbed up again and put them back in the nest.

VASHTI. [*Again looking down.*] It makes me giddy to look down. Why have you come here?

JUDAH. To be near you. I've been here every night since you have been in the castle.

VASHTI. Every night?

JUDAH. Yes. I couldn't keep away.

VASHTI. You haven't seen—no one has seen you?

JUDAH. No, I think not. They all sleep on the other side of the house; and look—[*Pointing up to the warder's seat*]—that seat in the hollow in the wall yonder seems to have been built on purpose that I might watch over you.

[*Comes down on to terrace.*

VASHTI. Lady Eve told me it was the warder's

place in the olden times ; that stone seat was his bed.

JUDAH. It has been mine. [*Comes to her.* JOPP *enters into conservatory. Comes in carelessly from dinner. Stops suddenly and listens.*] I've stayed here half the night praying that strength might be given you to finish your task. In three days your trial will be over ; you will have wrestled for Lady Eve's life, and you will have conquered. I heard that girl taunt you just now. She does not believe in you.

VASHTI. But you believe in me.

JUDAH. You know I do. You know I have never doubted you.

JOPP. [*Aside.*] My young Welshman is honest. I knew he was ! [*Exit.*

VASHTI. Thank you, thank you, Mr. Llewellyn, with all my heart. You don't know how those words help me.

JUDAH. [*Approaching her.*] Help you ! I help you ! Oh, you're above me, like heaven itself. But hear me. I must tell you—I love you !

VASHTI. Mr. Llewellyn, say no more.

JUDAH. I love you. Forgive my daring to say it. I'm mad to speak of human love to you. You're scarcely of this world at all. Oh ! but I love you, I love you ! From the first moment I saw you, when that poor woman tried to thank you for the health you had given her, and your face turned to her like an angel's in your pity, I have loved you.

You have been the secret spring of all my power When I speak to the people, it is your voice that speaks through me. Your love is a flame on my tongue. All the world is transfigured because you are in it. When I walk along the streets all the men and women seem to be smitten with your beauty. There is nothing common or mean or wicked anywhere: everything is good and bright and pure. Your presence makes all the earth beautiful and sacred, and your goodness is like your beauty, it spreads goodness all round you, as your beauty spreads beauty. You make me half divine. I love you, I love you!

[*Has sunk on his knees.*

VASHTI. [*Her face has shown alternate pain and pleasure. She speaks very quietly.*] If I were not good—if I were wicked?

JUDAH. You cannot be other than yourself.

VASHTI. But would you love me, whatever I was? Satisfy my woman's curiosity—would you love me if I were *not* good?

JUDAH. If you were not good it would not be you. [*Looking at her closely.*] What do you mean?

[*Pause.*

VASHTI. [*Assuming quiet, matter-of-fact tone.*] Nothing. I only asked out of curiosity. You must go. [JUDAH *turns away.*] Miss Jopp will be coming soon. Good-night.

JUDAH. You are not offended?

VASHTI. [*Very calm, without showing any trace of*

feeling.] Offended!—no. Oh, please say no more.

JUDAH. [*After a pause of pain.*] I will not—but I am as you are—something apart from other men and women. All my life has been different from others. Till six years ago I never had any companions but the hills and my father's cattle. Till I saw you I had never known what the love of man for woman was.

VASHTI. You have never loved any one before?

JUDAH. Never. To-night I have spoken the only words of love that I shall ever speak. [*Her face glows with delight.*] No woman will ever again hear me say that I love her.

VASHTI. [*Aside.*] Oh! [*With great delight.*] Are you sure of that?

JUDAH. Quite sure. It is not possible for me to love again.

VASHTI. Hark! Some one's coming. You must go. Quick!

[JUDAH *runs up steps; then gets over the parapet.* VASHTI *follows to top of steps.*

JUDAH. [*Descending the wall of the moat.*] Goodbye! Give me that handkerchief you wear.

[*She takes the handkerchief from her neck and throws it to him. He catches it.* VASHTI *leans over parapet.*

VASHTI. Take care, take care! [*He goes down; disappears.*] Oh, if he were killed I would dash myself over too, and die with him! [*Looks again; whispers down.*] Are you safe?

JUDAH. [*Below.*] Quite; do not fear.

VASHTI. If I had the courage to tell him! If he could know the truth of me, and yet love me! I will. I *will* tell him; and yet—I dare not. Oh, if you knew how it breaks my heart to deceive you!

DETHIC, *with cigar lighted, saunters on furtively along terrace.* VASHTI *is bending over parapet.*

DETHIC. [*In a loud whisper.*] Vashti!

VASHTI. [*Turns round.*] Bring me some food; I'm perishing with hunger.

DETHIC. By and by. I've been to London, and Tozer—

VASHTI. Hush!

SOPHIE *enters along terrace, and overhears* DETHIC'S *last words.* DETHIC *is confused.*

DETHIC. [*Going on.*] Yes, I saw Tozer, and he said— [*Sees* SOPHIE; *stops.*

SOPHIE. [*To* DETHIC.] Pray don't let me interrupt Mr. Tozer's message.

DETHIC. [*Confused.*] Oh, Tozer said nothing of importance—

SOPHIE. Ah! A member of Parliament possibly, or a popular preacher. Will you come with me

into the drawing-room, Miss Dethic, or do you prefer being alone?

VASHTI. [*At top of steps.*] I would rather be alone. [*Aside.*] He loves me! he loves me!

SOPHIE. You are sure you won't take any food?

[DETHIC *signs to her to say No, unseen by* SOPHIE.

VASHTI. I do not need it.

[*Pale, fixed, determined. Goes in to keep gateway.* SOPHIE *shrugs her shoulders. Goes up steps to fasten the gate.*

DETHIC. Do you hear that? This is a glorious triumph for us.

SOPHIE. [*Turns on step, fixing him.*] Ah, *you* have dined; your daughter *hasn't!*

DETHIC. [*Aside.*] If you don't come to some bad, wicked end, it *will* be a pity.

[*Exit along terrace.* SOPHIE *comes down, having locked door.*

JUXON PRALL *enters through conservatory, in a towering rage.*

JUXON. [*Throws book on table.*] Really, it's most lamentable! [*Goes up stage; leans on wall.*

SOPHIE. What is?

JUXON. For the past six years I have endeavoured to instil into my poor dear mother's mind the merest elements of logic. Will you believe me, Miss Jopp, that she fails to grasp the necessary consequence in the simplest syllogism?

SOPHIE. How strange it is, Mr. Juxon, that people like your parents should possess such a gifted son as you!

JUXON. It is one of the freaks of heredity. My brother James is not gifted. When I think of poor James, I am ashamed of my attainments.

SOPHIE. Why?

JUXON. James being quite a fool, I feel that I have unintentionally deprived him of his intellectual birthright.

SOPHIE. You ought to feel grateful for your own extraordinary endowments.

JUXON. [*Approaching her.*] Then you—you really have the penetration, Miss Jopp, to see that my acquirements are—if I may say so without egoism—not quite of the common order?

[*He somehow gets her hand, and continues during the scene nursing it between both of his in a seesaw way, moving her hand between his up and down about four inches below his chin, and using them to emphasize his discourse occasionally.*

SOPHIE. I never met with any one quite so congenial to me.

JUXON. Really—really—Miss Jopp, your mind, though necessarily possessing some feminine limitations, is one of the most philosophic I have ever met. In fact, for some time past—ever since we

attended those lectures by Professor Dobney last season—

SOPHIE. On mental pathology; very interesting, but Dobney is quite wrong in his deductions.

JUXON. Decidedly Dobney is wrong—deplorably wrong. Dobney is an insufferable, self-satisfied prig. I shall be compelled to tell Dobney my opinion of him one of these days. [*Pause.*] But—we'll leave Dobney for the time, and, as I was saying—as I was saying—

[*Hesitates; gets a little confused.*

SOPHIE. [*Helping him.*] Shall we sit down?

JUXON. [*Looks round.*] No; no, I don't think so. I think I can formulate my thoughts better standing. You'll permit me to speak quite frankly?

SOPHIE. Do so; I wish it.

JUXON. In approaching the really momentous subject of marriage—[*Pause.*] Have I made it plain to you that I am about to suggest that we should become united for life?

SOPHIE. [*Unembarrassed.*] I gathered as much.

JUXON. Thank you. I have considered the matter very carefully, and—you fully understand, do you not, that I am now making you a definitive offer of marriage?

SOPHIE. [*Quite unembarrassed.*] Oh yes. And I may say frankly, Mr. Juxon, I am disposed to accept you—under certain conditions.

JUXON. Pecuniary, I suppose? You are aware I am quite dependent upon my father. I cannot

truthfully affirm that my poor father is of the slightest use in the world, and yet, so far as I can judge, there is very little prospect of his immediately retiring from it. Not that I wish him to do so; still, it would simplify matters. However, as I am one of his only two children, I suppose he will make some provision for me.

SOPHIE. My objections were not pecuniary, but physiological.

JUXON. Very necessary! Extremely necessary! How sensible of you! The neglect of the simplest physiological principles is simply deplorable. But, my dear Miss Jopp, my physical development, though somewhat retarded by my great mental exertions, is in the most satisfactory state.

SOPHIE. You had a bad cough last winter.

JUXON. Nothing, nothing, I assure you. [*Strikes his chest twice with* SOPHIE'S *hand. Coughs.*] My lungs are organically sound. In fact, for a man of medium height and build, my whole frame is unusually vigorous and elastic. However, I would, of course, insure my life; and it might perhaps be some satisfaction to you if I were to bring you the certificate from the Life Insurance Society.

SOPHIE. If you don't mind.

JUXON. Not at all. Then I suppose we may consider the matter settled.

SOPHIE. [*Unmoved.*] Quite so—so far as I am concerned.

JUXON. There's nothing else to discuss?

SOPHIE. No, not that I remember.

[*Long pause. He retains her hand; is about to raise it to his lips, then is undecided whether he should kiss her face. She appears absolutely indifferent. He hesitates between her lips and her hand; finally raises her hand to his lips, kisses it rather gingerly, drops it suddenly.* SOPHIE *goes down right.* JUXON *goes to table, takes his book, and returns before speaking.*

[*Pause.*]

JUXON. I really think we may congratulate ourselves.

SOPHIE. Um ! I wonder where everybody is.

JUXON. I trust you don't feel dull.

SOPHIE. [*Quickly.*] Not at all.

JUXON. I'm glad of that. [*Takes her hand as before.*] We might perhaps now sit down for a while. Shall we ?

SOPHIE. Yes. [*They sit.*] How quickly we came to a perfect understanding !

JUXON. Yes. [*Pauses.*] I do really think we may congratulate ourselves.

SOPHIE. I think so.

JOPP *and* PRALL *come into conservatory smoking, and stand with backs to audience.*

JUXON. Our fathers — there's no necessity to mention our decision to them at present.

SOPHIE. [*After a pause of consideration.*] No, I should say not. Marriage being a purely personal matter—

JUXON. Quite so.

SOPHIE. It concerns ourselves only.

JUXON. Precisely. I shall, of course, inform my poor father and mother before we marry.

SOPHIE. Yes. I may possibly tell my father, but he'll not interfere ; he's far too sensible.

JUXON. I wish I could say the same of mine.

JOPP. [*Saunters on to terrace.*] Oh, here you are. How's our prisoner ?

SOPHIE. Hungry. Mr. Dethic seems most anxious to speak to her.

JOPP. She has already had one visitor.

SOPHIE. Who ?

JOPP. That strange young minister, Mr. Llewellyn, has been here. I heard him speak to her a few minutes ago.

SOPHIE. He may have brought her food.

JOPP. Oh, no. I heard quite enough to satisfy me. Besides, there's no doubt about his honesty. He's a fanatic, but he's as true as the day.

MR. P. Eighteen days gone out of the twenty-one. Come, Jopp, what do you say now ?

JOPP. Miss Dethic is a marvel.

MR. P. You candidly confess yourself beaten ?

JOPP. I candidly confess, Prall, I don't know how it's done.

DETHIC *strolls on to terrace with cigar. Listening, leans against wall.*

MR. P. Oh, come, come, Jopp ; you don't suspect any trickery ?

JOPP. My dear Prall, I've lived sixty years in this world. I have never met with a single instance of cheating or deception or fraud of any description. I am told such things are occasionally practised on this planet, though happily not in this degree of longitude. Still, I do occasionally meet with—

MR. P. With what ?

JOPP. With things that puzzle me. However, no amount of evidence that my eyes or ears can bring shall ever shake my theory that human nature is absolutely above suspicion.

MR. P. Now, Jopp, I consider that very unhandsome. You find yourself beaten, and you hint at treachery. [DETHIC *is listening on terrace.*

SOPHIE. We are not beaten yet, Mr. Prall. There are three days more, and we intend from to-morrow to watch Miss Dethic more closely.

DETHIC. [*Aside.*] Oh, you beauty ! [*Comes forward.* MRS. PRALL *enters at conservatory.*] You may make what rules you like, Miss Jopp. My dear child will prove herself triumphant, as she has done hitherto. Has she not, Mrs. Prall ?

MRS. P. She has, indeed. I'm quite sure there is no deception. [*Exit* DETHIC *through archway.*

Enter LADY EVE *and* LORD A. *on terrace.*

LADY E. What are you talking about? Miss Dethic? I'm sure she has this strange power, whatever it is. Since she has been in the house I've felt so much better.

LORD A. [*To* JOPP, *aside.*] You hear that?

LADY E. Isn't she coming to say good-night to me?

SOPHIE. I'll bring her to you.

[*Goes up the keep steps and opens door.*]

MRS. P. [*Aside to* JUXON.] I wish, Juxon, you wouldn't be so friendly with that girl. She seems to me a highly unsuitable companion for a young man.

JUXON. We will not discuss that question just now, my dear mother.

SOPHIE. [*At top of steps, calls.*] Miss Dethic! [VASHTI *appears from tower door.*] Lady Eve wants to say good-night to you.

VASHTI *runs down steps with bravado and assumed cheerfulness to* LADY EVE. *They go down stage together.*

JOPP. [*Aside, watching her.*] Very well put on, young lady; very well put on.

[SOPHIE *has come down steps.* JUXON *joins her at back. They cross together and exeunt along terrace.*

LORD A. How are you this evening, Miss Dethic?

VASHTI. Quite well, Lord Asgarby—wonderfully well. [*With assumed gaiety.*] We'll take a run in the garden—shall we, Lady Eve?

LADY E. [*Excitedly.*] Yes; let's race to the lodge gates. Professor Jopp, Miss Dethic will win the day.

JOPP. Apparently.

LADY E. You see strength does come to those to whom she wills it.

JOPP. Yes, I see.

LADY E. You are quite convinced?

JOPP. Quite.

LADY E. Then there is no necessity for her to fast any longer?

JOPP. None whatever. I cordially recommend her to give up her dangerous experiment.

VASHTI. I shall not give up my experiment, dangerous or not. [*To* LADY E.] Come, it's stifling here. We'll race to the lodge—no, to the lake or anywhere.

LADY E. [*Catching her excitement.*] Yes. Come along.

JOPP. [*Intercepts them as they are going.*] Stay, Miss Dethic. If you care for her health, persuade her not to stay up. Come, Lady Eve, it's nearly ten o'clock, and whatever Miss Dethic's mysterious method is, it is far more likely to act if you keep early hours. Come, say good-night.

LADY E. No. [*Turns away petulantly.*] I don't want to go to bed. I never really feel alive till after dinner. Miss Dethic—[VASHTI *goes to her*]—I want to stay near you. Come! The moonlight's lovely. Our race! [JOPP *again intercepts them.*

JOPP. The night air by the lake is dangerous, Miss Dethic. Persuade her to go to bed.

VASHTI. [*After a pause; to* LADY EVE.] Professor Jopp is right. Say good-night to us.

[PRALL *rises, and exit with* MRS. P.

LADY E. [*Pouting.*] Oh, very well. [*Kisses her. To* LORD A.] Good-night.

LORD A. Good-night, my dear.

MRS. P. Good-night, Lady Eve.

[*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. PRALL.

LORD A. [*Kisses her very passionately.*] You'll soon be fast asleep.

LADY E. [*Excitedly.*] No, I shan't. I never slept till three last night. And then I dreamed—I had the strangest dream about you. [*Runs to* VASHTI.] I must tell you. [*Kneels by her.*] I dreamed we were drowning together. Professor Jopp, have you ever been nearly drowned? It's enchanting! At first we tried to swim, and it was hard work to keep up; and the waves dashed over us, and took away our breath; and then I caught you in my arms, and I said, "Don't let us try to keep alive any more. Let's sink, and see what it is like." And I felt so strong. I dragged you under the water; it was delightful! Down—down—down—I felt like a mer-

maid dragging you down to my home ; and we kept on sinking, and the deeper we got the clearer and sweeter the water was: it was full of lovely gold and silver fish, and they swam round us ; and we went through gardens of waving purple seaweed, and all the little bubbles in the water turned into diamonds and hung round our necks, and dragged us deeper still, and we kept on falling for hours ; and at last you wanted to leave me, but I clung to you and pulled you down, and said, " How can you want to go back to that hateful world? Come down and drown with me, drown—drown—drown! " And you said, " Let me go—I want to get back to life. There is some one who loves me up there." And I said, " There are two who love you down here—Death and I. Stay with us and die. You don't know how sweet it is." But you kissed me and said good-bye ; and I tried to keep you, but you faded out of my arms ; and when I tried to hold you, there was no one there, and I cried out, " Stay with me—stay with me ! " And then I woke, and I was crying, and it was just daylight ! You won't leave me ! [*Throwing her arms round* VASHTI, *desperately weeping, her head on* VASHTI'S *knee.*

VASHTI. Do not fear. If I cannot bring you back to life with me, I will stay and drown with you.

Re-enter MR. *and* MRS. PRALL.

LADY E. [*Kisses her passionately; throws her arms*

around VASHTI'S *neck.*] I don't want to go away from you.

JOPP. [*Has been listening and showing impatience and anxiety at* LADY EVE'S *excitement.*] Come, Lady Eve, this excitement will never do. Come, come! Bed, bed, bed! Say good-night.

LADY E. Good-night, Professor Jopp.

[*Shakes his hand, then crosses to conservatory steps.*

JOPP. And no dreams to-night.

LADY E. [*On conservatory steps.*] Yes, I shall dream of you.

JOPP. You won't drown me?

LADY E. No, I'll fly away with you to the stars.

[*Kisses her hand to* VASHTI, *and exit through conservatory.*

Re-enter DETHIC *at archway.*

JOPP. [*Aside sternly to* VASHTI.] If you wish to keep her alive, don't let her excite herself as she has done to-night. You understand?

VASHTI. [*Pause.*] I understand.

[*Exit* JOPP *along terrace.* VASHTI *goes up to terrace.*

MR. P. [*Cordially.*] She's wonderfully improved, Asgarby.

DETHIC. I told Lord Asgarby how it would be. I hope, my lord, you are satisfied.

LORD A. She certainly seems better.

ROPER *enters through conservatory.*

ROPER. Mr. Prall's carriage. [*Exit.*

Re-enter SOPHIE *and* JUXON.

MR. P. Good-night, Asgarby. We'll come over again on Monday. Good-night, Miss Dethic.

[*Shakes hands and crosses to conservatory.*

MRS. P. [*Shakes hands with* LORD A. *To* VASHTI.] Good-night, dear. [*Kisses* VASHTI. *Then crosses to conservatory.*] Are you ready, Juxon?

JUXON. [*Lighting cigarette.*] I would prefer to walk. Our drive home from the Selwyns' the other night was far from pleasant to *me.*

MR. P. You would insist on arguing all the way.

JUXON. My dear father, when you advance such extraordinary opinions, how can I refrain from endeavouring to put you right? Ah, when shall I reconcile myself to the inevitable folly of the vast majority of my fellow-creatures?

MR. P. Sooner than the majority of your fellow-creatures will reconcile themselves to your wisdom.

MRS. P. Then you'll walk home, Juxon?

JUXON. If you don't mind. I'm really afraid of being drawn into some discussion with you or my father, and really I am not equal to the exertion to-night—I'm not, indeed!

MR. P. Very well, my boy, we will spare you our company.

[MR. *and* MRS. PRALL *and* LORD A. *exeunt through conservatory.*

DETHIC. [*Creeping up to* VASHTI, *aside to her.*

Look out for me as soon as the house is asleep. [SOPHIE *turns sharply, nearly catching him.*] A lovely moon! [*Exit along terrace.*

SOPHIE. [*Aside to* JUXON.] Don't go away—come back here in an hour.

JUXON. Why?

SOPHIE. Mr. Dethic is going to run the blockade to-night. [JOPP *and* LORD A. *re-enter in conservatory.*] We'll watch him. Hush!

JUXON. [*To* LORD A.] Good-night, Lord Asgarby. Good-night, Jopp. [*Crosses them to conservatory. With a smile of superiority.*] My poor father seems quite happy in displaying his folly and ignorance. Did you ever witness such a lamentable exhibition? Tchk! Tchk!

[*Exit through conservatory.*

LORD A. [*To* JOPP.] You heard what Eve said —she's really better! [*Very anxiously.*

JOPP. A little, perhaps. But you must keep her from these fits of excitement. They'll do no end of mischief.

LORD A. Good-night, Miss Dethic. You're sure your own health is not suffering?

[*Shakes hands with her.*

VASHTI. Quite sure, my lord. Good-night.

[*Exit* LORD A. *by terrace, after shaking hands with* SOPHIE.

SOPHIE. Shall I see you safely housed for the night, Miss Dethic?

VASHTI. I am ready.

SOPHIE. Come, then.

[*Goes up steps and into tower.*

VASHTI. Good-night, Professor Jopp.

JOPP. Good-night.

VASHTI. [*Triumphantly.*] You see I shall count Lady Eve amongst those whom I have cured.

JOPP. You mean those who have cured themselves.

VASHTI. Cured themselves?

JOPP. If you don't know the secret of this mysterious power of yours, I'll explain it to you. These good folks whom you cure are all suffering from different kinds of nervous diseases, where only volition is required to make them better. Their faith in you gives the necessary shock to their volition, and brings its powers into exercise. But in all cases of organic disease I assure you you are as helpless as—as any regular practitioner; and that's saying a good deal.

VASHTI. But there is no proof that I have not cured them.

JOPP. Certainly there is no proof. And that is why I think you are behaving very foolishly.

VASHTI. What do you mean?

JOPP. If your patients insist on getting well, neither I nor any one else can possibly prove you have not cured them. But—I can and will prove that you can't live without eating.

VASHTI. [*Goes up a few steps; staggers. He comes*

to her assistance. She repulses him; stands panting.] You'll prove that? Very well. Prove it—if you can.

JOPP. You are foolish. Think again. Trust me. You shall find me one of the best friends you ever had.

VASHTI. What do you mean?

JOPP. You've set yourself a task beyond your strength. Give it up.

VASHTI. Ah! You find I've beaten you, and now you want me to give you the victory.

JOPP. [*Quietly, earnestly, rather tenderly.*] I want no victory, Miss Dethic. Come, let's both give up. What do you say?

VASHTI. [*Pause.*] No.

JOPP. [*Shrugs his shoulders; changes his tone.*] So be it. Only take care, because—

VASHTI. Because?

JOPP. The Home Secretary hasn't let my spiritualist friend out of jail yet.

VASHTI. [*Terribly frightened, but trying to hide it with a pretended smile. Frightened, hoarse whisper.*] Would you send me to jail?

JOPP. I should be sorry: but you're trifling with the truth; you're playing upon *sacred feelings;* and I warn you I shall be *merciless* to you.

[VASHTI *shows terrible fright. Staggers on steps.* SOPHIE *holds the door open for her.*

SOPHIE. You're ill, Miss Dethic. Shall I stay with you? [*Offers to support her.*

VASHTI. Thank you. I'm quite well. Good-night.

[*Goes into keep.* SOPHIE *locks the door after her.*

JOPP. [*As* SOPHIE *comes down-stairs.*] That's a damned silly girl, but she's got pluck.

SOPHIE. There's a relief expedition intended to-night.

JOPP. She's locked in. No one can get to her.

SOPHIE. No, but still I think we'd better watch the father.

Enter ROPER *by terrace, carrying lantern.*

ROPER. Can I lock up, sir?

JOPP. Yes; we're just going off to bed. Roper, could you leave the conservatory unlocked for to-night?

ROPER. Certainly, sir. I can lock the drawing-room door, so that there's no fear of anybody getting into the house.

JOPP. Thank you, Roper. Good-night.

ROPER. Good-night, sir. Young lady in the keep room going on quite comfortable, I hope?

JOPP. Quite, Roper; so she says. Good-night.

ROPER. Good-night, sir.

[*Exeunt* JOPP *and* SOPHIE *along terrace.* ROPER *turns out lamp in conservatory; exit; shuts door, and is heard to turn key in lock.*

Front of stage dark. Moonlight on terrace, and part of stage. After a long pause JUDAH *is seen climbing over parapet. Comes to the front of the keep.*

JUDAH. [*Looking towards her window.*] I cannot leave you. You draw me to you, loadstar of purity and goodness. Oh, there is something more than mortal in your beauty! And I dared to speak of love to you, of earthly love!—I, who am not worthy to breathe the same air, or touch your garment with my lips. Forgive me! Let me but walk where your feet have trodden, speak sometimes with you, look upon your heavenly beauty, see you do your gracious acts of mercy and kindness, and it shall be enough for me. [*Standing on top of steps, looking up at the house.*] The house is quiet; all the lights are out; they are asleep. [*Turns again towards keep.*] Are you asleep, too, worn out with fasting and watching? Giving up your life that others may live? Oh, let me be your sentinel, your watch-dog, and keep guard that no evil thing comes near you. Nay, no evil thing could come near you. Keep her! Give her strength to defeat her enemies, and show Thy power to them that deny Thee! [*Going into warder's niche, is hidden.*

Pause. DETHIC *enters at terrace, looking cautiously round.*

DETHIC. That confounded moon! What the plague does it want to shine to-night for?—as if it couldn't blaze away some other night! Thank goodness, everybody sleeps on the other side of the house. They're all safely in bed by this time. What's this? The conservatory door open? There's

some one in there. [*Striking match and searching conservatory.*] No. It's been left open by accident. If I'd known that, I might have got out this way. I must risk it and give her the key. [*Goes up the steps;* JUDAH *is in the shade of the keep watching him.* DETHIC *pulls out a key, opens door very quietly and gingerly, looking up at the house to see whether he is watched all the while. Opens door.*] Vashti! Vashti! [*Taking something out of his pocket.*

VASHTI. [*In doorway.*] Have you brought it?

DETHIC. Yes, my darling. Here, here. Come down to the conservatory. I mustn't leave the house again. [*Giving her something,* VASHTI *eats ravenously.*] I've got plenty of food for you, but I had to drop out of the first-floor window, so I was obliged to leave it in my room.

VASHTI. Go and fetch it. I must have it. I'm starving

DETHIC. [*Brings her down steps.*] My darling, that Miss Jopp is on the lookout. I mustn't be seen again. Here, take this key. You see, I got it copied. Tozer did it. I stole it from Miss Jopp. She never missed it, and I put it back in her pocket without her even knowing it. They've forgotten to lock up the conservatory. You come in there and wait. You know that door that leads into the drawing-room. I'll bring it to you there.

VASHTI. But that door is locked and bolted.

DETHIC. The key's left in it on the other side

I took stock of that. You wait down there, and I'll give it to you in ten minutes from now.

VASHTI. Bring it me, bring it me! Quick! I don't want to be found down here.

DETHIC. All right, my love. Wait there in the conservatory. I won't keep you long.

VASHTI. Make haste! [DETHIC *goes off at terrace.* VASHTI *watches* DETHIC *going off.* JUDAH *rises in the warder's seat and comes down steps. She hears his footsteps, turns round, and sees him on steps.*] You! [*Deadly quiet whisper.*] You heard?

JUDAH. [*Very calm.*] Every word.

VASHTI. You know what I am.

JUDAH. [*Still very calm.*] Don't I tell you I heard all?

VASHTI. [*Pause.*] What do you think of me? [*He does not reply. In more agitated tone.*] What do you think of me? [*Still no reply. Again, more excited.*] Tell me; I must know. What do you think of me? [*Goes up to him.*

JUDAH. I cannot think. Good is evil, day is night. Are you angel or devil—or both? What are you? The brightest saint of all hell, the blackest fiend of all heaven? What are you? Oh, if I had died before I knew!

VASHTI. [*Imploringly.*] Do not speak like that. I told you I was not a saint, but only a woman—a vain, foolish, ambitious girl; but not—not willingly wicked, only weak. Oh! [*Imploringly.*] Do not

think badly of me. I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it! [*Kneels and clings to him.*

JUDAH. [*Pushing her away.*] You'd cast your snares round me again. You would make me believe in you now—now—after what I have heard. And—God forgive me—if I listen to you I shall be ready to sell my eternal peace, my very soul, at your bidding. Let me go, woman—let me go!

[*Throwing her from him*, VASHTI, *on her knees, clings to him, holds him.*

VASHTI. [*Very imploringly.*] No, no; hear me first—you must hear me—you shall hear me, and then kill me if you like—for I cannot live if you hate me! Hear me—oh! it is the very last thing I shall ever beg of you.

JUDAH. [*Tears himself away from her.*] Woman! I know you.

VASHTI. No—you do not know me; and you will not hear me. [*Bursts into tears. He is going, but is stopped by her appealing attitude. Kneeling.*] You don't know what my childhood and girlhood were like—how often we were pressed for money. Sometimes we had scarcely bread enough to eat. We went to Spain. I found I was able to cure many of the foolish country people if they only believed in me, and my father persuaded me if I could only show them that I could live without food it would be a sign of my possessing supernatural power. I began, and it was as he said. I

found everybody believed in me. When I had once begun, I was obliged to go on. We came back to England and then I met you ; and at first I was pleased to see what power I had over you. But when I saw that you believed in me and loved me, I gradually felt how wicked I'd been. I tried again and again to give it up; I tried to tell you. I wanted you to know the truth about me, and yet I could not bear you to think that I was not worthy of your love. You know it now. Oh ! tell me you forgive me. [*Seizing his hand. Imploringly.*] Oh, say you forgive me. [*Very emphatic.*

JUDAH. [*Has regained calmness.*] I forgive you. Let me go. [*Going up stage, she retains his hand.*

VASHTI. Good-bye.

[*She takes his hand to her lips, and kisses it.*

JUDAH. [*Fired with her kiss.*] What have you done ? [*Looks at her in the moonlight.*] Oh, you are more beautiful than ever to-night. [*Looking at her passionately.*] This is all a dream. I blot the past hour from my memory. You're mad to say that you could cheat and deceive. I will not believe you. [*Takes both her hands in his.*] You are very truth. How dare you slander yourself ?

VASHTI. Ah ! No ! [*Drawing away from him; withdraws her hand.*] Know me for what I am—a cheat, an impostor, a liar.

JUDAH. Hush ! hush ! You shall not say so.

VASHTI. Oh ! why should you deceive yourself ?

You know the truth of me at last, and I am glad—yes, I am glad! Think what I am—vain, weak, false!

JUDAH. Why, yes, perhaps you are, and therefore so much nearer me. [*Raises her and clasps her in his arms.*] I thought you out of my reach, up there amongst the stars; and you're of this earth, like myself, a woman made for me! Ah, yes! I'm glad you are what you are, for I can make you mine now.

VASHTI. [*Breaking away from him.*] No, no, for your own sake you must give me up; have no more to do with me. Disown me; forget me!

JUDAH. Forget you!

VASHTI. You must. All your future is at stake. Forget me! It is the best for both; but—you won't betray me?

JUDAH. Betray you? I love you. [*Embracing her.*] Oh, don't you see you are nearer to me for this night; we are bound to each other. I love you! I love you! My wife!

VASHTI. [*Recoiling from him, recovers herself with immense effort. Speaks calmly.*] I cannot be your wife—I—

JUDAH. You do not love me?

VASHTI. I cannot be your wife. [*Noise of footsteps heard outside on terrace.*] Ah, hush! Who's that?

[JUDAH *is about to send her up steps, but thinking*

they will be seen, takes her into the conservatory. They hide behind palms. SOPHIE *and* JOPP *come along terrace, listening at back.*

SOPHIE. I certainly heard voices.

JOPP. I thought so. [*Crosses to archway; looks off.*

SOPHIE. Everything is quiet. Let's wait here. It's the best place to watch the keep.

JOPP. [*Yawning.*] Deuce take the girl! To think I should be fool enough to let her rob me of my beauty-sleep to prove to the British public that she's a swindler.

SOPHIE. There will be some satisfaction in thoroughly exposing her, and seeing her safely locked up.

JOPP. It's the British public that ought to be locked up till it learns wisdom.

SOPHIE. It would be locked up for ever, then.

JOPP. I dare say. Still I must own that in the great epic war between rogues and fools all my sympathies go with the rogues.

SOPHIE. So do mine; but that's no reason why we should not hang both rogues and fools.

JOPP. Oh, I mean to punish my lady. She should have accepted my terms an hour ago; now it's too late.

[*A noise of very gently withdrawing locks and bolts is heard at the drawing-room door.*

SOPHIE. [*Rises, seizes* JOPP'S *hand;* JOPP *rises to*

meet her.] Hush! What did I tell you? Some one is at the drawing-room door.

JOPP. Mr. Dethic. We'll let him get well at his work before we disturb him. The archway—quick!

[SOPHIE *goes off at archway.* JOPP *follows, and closes door after them.* DETHIC *cautiously opens door in conservatory and is coming on.*

JUDAH. [*In conservatory, in a whisper.*] Keep back! If you are seen, you'll ruin her. [*Hurries* Dethic *off.* *To* VASHTI.] Quick, up the steps! Lock yourself in; leave the rest to me.

[VASHTI *takes the key that* DETHIC *has given her out of her pocket, rushes up steps with it, goes in, closes keep door after her, locks herself in.* JUDAH *goes up the steps; takes his place in the warder's niche and is hidden.*

JOPP *and* SOPHIE *re-enter from archway door on terrace and come out.*

JOPP. He's gone up!

SOPHIE. Yes, I heard his steps.

JOPP. Give me the key. You go along the terrace and give the alarm. [*Exit* SOPHIE *along the terrace.*] He's got another key, then.

[JOPP *goes up steps; opens keep door. Fire-bell is heard to ring violently. General alarm of the house.* LORD A. *enters along terrace. Comes to foot of steps.* SOPHIE *re-enters*

from terrace after the ringing of the fire-bell is done.

LORD A. What is it, Jopp?

JOPP. [*At top of steps.*] Mr. Dethic is now in the keep, taking food to his daughter.

Re-enter SOPHIE *with* LADY EVE, *followed by* JUXON, ROPER *with lantern, and two* SERVANTS *in livery.*

LORD A. Where is the key?

JOPP. I have it. [*Opens the keep door and calls.* Mr. Dethic, Mr. Dethic!

VASHTI. [*Comes to door.*] What is the matter?

LORD A. Your father is in there—ask him to come out.

VASHTI. My father is not here.

JOPP. You are alone?

VASHTI. I am alone. Search the place if you please.

[JOPP *goes in.* JUDAH *comes down from the warder's seat on to the terrace.* VASHTI *follows him.*

LORD A. Mr. Llewellyn! What are you doing here?

JUDAH. I've watched here every night of Miss Dethic's stay.

LORD A. You've watched here? How long have you been here to-night?

JUDAH. Ever since the house went to rest.

[*Comes down steps.*

LORD A. You have brought Miss Dethic food.

JUDAH. No.

[JOPP *returns from keep-room crestfallen.*

JOPP. I am mistaken; I own it. But I heard voices, I'm sure. Who was it? Who was speaking here a few moments ago? Mr. Llewellyn! [*Challenges* JUDAH.] You know something of this, sir.

JUDAH. I know nothing. [*Pause.* JOPP *looks at him.*] Don't you believe me?

JOPP. [*Looking at him.*] I don't know. Give me your oath—you have not brought Miss Dethic any food. [VASHTI *looks at* JUDAH.

JUDAH. My oath—I have not brought Miss Dethic any food.

JOPP. Your oath—you have not seen her take any. [VASHTI *looks at him.*

JUDAH. [*After a pause.*] My oath—I have not seen her take any. [VASHTI *shows relief.*

JOPP. Your oath—she has not been outside that door, to your knowledge. [*Longer pause.*

JUDAH. My oath—she has not been outside that door to my knowledge.

JOPP. [*Looks at him.*] Enough! I take your word. I was mistaken.

CURTAIN.

A year passes between Acts II. and III.

ACT III

SCENE. *Same as in Act I.*

Discover LADY EVE *seated in armchair, and* LORD ASGARBY *standing by* LADY EVE.

LADY E. Then everything's settled.

LORD A. Everything. Granger brings the deed to-day, and Mr. Llewellyn and Papworthy are to meet me and read it over.

LADY E. And on the foundation-stone it is to be carved that the building is in memory of my getting well again.

LORD A. Yes.

LADY E. And nothing is to be said about Vashti having cured me?

LORD A. No, my dear; it is better to leave such questions alone.

LADY E. [*Pettishly.*] But it is she who has cured me. If she had not come to Asgarby when she did, the wind would have blown me away before this.

LORD A. Eve, my darling, don't speak like this!

LADY E. Why not? Leaves must fall, even rose-leaves; and then they mustn't litter the garden—they must be swept away to make room for the live flowers. [*Goes to window and exit.*

LORD A. She is better; she is stronger than she has ever been. What does it matter what the cause is? [LADY EVE *comes swiftly in again.*

LADY E. Here's that dreadful Mr. Dethic. He's always hinting to me about money. I'm sure Vashti won't like him to live with her and Mr. Llewellyn. Can't you pension him to live away from them?

LORD A. Yes, dear, if you wish it.

DETHIC *enters at window, rather better dressed, affable, familiar, jaunty.*

DETHIC. Ha! Do you know, my lord, the more I see of this noble historical pile, the more I'm intoxicated with it!

LORD A. [*Coolly.*] Indeed, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Language entirely fails to convey the depth of my attachment to this venerable place and its venerable owner.

LORD A. We will spare you the expression of your feelings, Mr. Dethic. Lady Eve and I have been speaking of your daughter's approaching marriage to Mr. Llewellyn. [DETHIC *shows great interest.*] You will not, I suppose, live with them?

DETHIC. Well, my lord, nothing has been mentioned about my future, but I see no reason why I should not be perfectly happy and comfortable with my dear children.

LORD A. That arrangement will suit them?

DETHIC. I should say so. I always make myself

agreeable in all circles of society, and if nobody expresses a violent dislike to my company, I take it for granted I'm welcome, and—if I may use a playful term—chum on !

LORD A. Miss Dethic refuses to accept my offer of a provision for herself.

DETHIC. It's ungrateful of her. I've argued it with her scores of times. I know your lordship will never suspect us of mercenary motives; but still, if any trifling way of showing your gratitude should suggest itself— [VASHTI *enters.* LADY EVE *joins her.* VASHTI *kisses her. Seeing* VASHTI, DETHIC *drops his voice.*] I think, my lord, I could better express my paternal care for Vashti's future if we were out of her hearing.

LORD A. Doubtless. Come this way, Mr. Dethic. I have a proposal to make to you on the subject.

DETHIC. [*Very gratefully.*] Thank you, my lord, thank you.

[LORD A. *and* DETHIC *exeunt at window.* VASHTI *seats herself.* LADY EVE *kneels by her side.*

LADY E. You grow sadder and sadder the nearer you get to your wedding-day. How is it ?

VASHTI. No, no !

LADY E. Yes, you do. You love Mr. Llewellyn ?

VASHTI. Love him !

LADY E. And he loves you. I wish I had a

lover. Oh, if somebody would but once—only once look at me as Mr. Llewellyn looks at you!

VASHTI. [*Radiant.*] He does love me!

LADY E. Yes, but he has changed.

VASHTI. [*Alarmed.*] Changed! No, no! He cannot change.

LADY E. Yes, he doesn't love you now as he did a year ago.

VASHTI. Oh, don't say that! don't say that! What do you mean?

LADY E. He used to look at you as if he wanted to worship you; now he looks at you as if he wanted to protect you.

VASHTI. [*Reassured—a great sigh of relief; in a low, pleased voice.*] I want him to protect me.

Enter JUDAH *at window, very pale, thinner, older.*

JUDAH. Lord Asgarby told me I should find you here.

[LADY EVE *runs to him, takes his hand, looks at him critically for a few seconds.*

LADY E. You too! [*Looks from one to the other.*] What makes you both so sad? My father has promised me everything I asked him for you. It is to be the most magnificent building in Beachampton, and it is to be endowed while you are its minister, so that you will be perfectly happy, both of you, for all your lives.

JUDAH. I have done nothing to deserve this, Lady Eve. I cannot take it.

LORD A. *enters at window.*

LADY E. Yes, you must! Mr. Llewellyn says he will not take your gift. Tell him he must.

LORD A. Indeed you must, Mr. Llewellyn. I promised if my child's life were spared that whatever Miss Dethic should ask, I would give her.

JUDAH. But it is too much; besides, I have done nothing.

LORD A. You are doing immense good; your example is even better than your words. [JUDAH *winces.*] We need such men as you—truthful, upright, honest, open as the day. I do not ask what your creed is: your actions are enough for me—

[JUDAH *shows compunction.*

LORD A. [*Going up to* LADY EVE.] What are you doing, Eve?

LADY EVE. [*Blowing away the thistledown.*] Seeing how long I shall live.

LORD A. How can you tell?

LADY E. Don't you see? I have blown six times, and all the seeds have flown from the stalk. I shall live just six years longer.

LORD A. [*Clasping her very tenderly.*] Eve!

[*Exeunt* LORD A. *and* LADY EVE *by window.* JUDAH *and* VASHTI *watch them off, then instinctively go to each other.*

VASHTI. You are ill? [*Takes his hands.*

JUDAH. It is nothing. You?

VASHTI. I'm well enough; but you—you are

working too hard. Every one says you must break down. [*Pause. Frightened whisper.*] What ailed you yesterday morning?

JUDAH. In the service?

VASHTI. Yes.

JUDAH. Nothing. Why? I spoke as usual, did I not?

VASHTI. Yes; but much more powerfully. This last year—ever since—[*Pause*]—ever since that dreadful night here, your tongue seems to be on fire; you speak as you never spoke before.

JUDAH. Do I? I ought to be able to proclaim the truth, for I know what lying is.

VASHTI. Hush, hush! don't speak like that! Tell me—what was it yesterday morning?

JUDAH. You noticed, then?

VASHTI. Only that you were much disturbed, and once I thought you would have broken down. What was it?

JUDAH. The same as it has been all the year; only it was worse than ever yesterday. Every sentence I spoke I heard shouted in my ear, "Lies, lies; come down, liar! Come down! Lies! Lies! Lies!" It spoke so plainly I thought all the congregation must have heard it; and afterwards, as I poured out the wine, it laughed in the cup and said, "Go on, go on! Poison them, poison them with your lies! Poison them!"

VASHTI. [*Clinging to him—in a frightened whis-*

per.] Hush! hush! You must not speak like this. Indeed there was nothing.

JUDAH. I know there was nothing, but I heard it. I've heard it all night long. It's been with me on my walk here this morning—on the other side of the hedge as I came along. It kept mocking at me! Hark! It's here now. In this room. Don't you hear it?

VASHTI. No; there is not a sound.

JUDAH. Yes. Hark; there! Listen! You hear what it says. Liar! Hypocrite! Liar! Hypocrite!

[*Stretches out his hands in mute appeal; then falls on settee, shivering with horror.*

VASHTI. [*Goes to him.*] Oh, my dear one, my best loved! Indeed, indeed, all is still as the grave!

JUDAH. [*Rises.*] If it were so! If I could stop my ears forever! Silence! Silence! Eternal silence! [*Pause.*] We'll leave this place!

VASHTI. Yes, yes; where shall we go?

JUDAH. Anywhere! anywhere! I can't stay here! Why can't they give up building this church for me?

VASHTI. Lady Eve has set her heart upon it. The architect and the lawyer and everybody are coming this afternoon. It is to be the most beautiful building in the city.

JUDAH. It won't stand. If they lay the foundations as deep as the roots of the hills, and build the

walls twenty feet thick, it can't stand. It's built on lies.

VASHTI. Oh, don't speak like this! You tear my heart to pieces.

[*Bursts into tears; falls on her knees—head on his knees.*

JUDAH. [*Very tenderly takes her to him.*] Forgive me, dear! You, too, look weary. I ought not to have told you.

VASHTI. Yes, yes, let me share all your griefs, all your burdens, as you have shared mine. Oh! I cannot bear to think what I have done. If I should be discovered! if I should bring disgrace upon you now!

JUDAH. Very well, let it be so; I can bear it.

VASHTI. No! No! Every one believes in you, and I am so proud of you; I could not bear to have your name dragged in the mire with mine. Give me up even now, send me away from you; let me go.

JUDAH. Not for every blessing in this world will I part from you! [*Takes her in his arms.*] Heap them all up—fame, riches, health, peace of mind, length of days, honour, friendship, every joy of body, mind, and soul that the heart of man can desire—put them in one scale and your love in the other. I will not have them—I don't want them. I want your love—I will not barter you away for all the world contains. [*Clasping her very tenderly.*

VASHTI. Oh! but think what I am.

JUDAH. You are yourself! You are myself! Whatever you are I will make myself that I may be like you. I will deserve you, be sure! I will be your mate. If you are evil, I will be evil too, so that at the last I may taste every drop of suffering that you taste, feel every pang, and keep your soul side by side with mine forever! [*Pause.*

VASHTI. If you knew how I have tried to be good since I have known you! Every moment of my life I try to be just that woman you thought me before you knew me for what I am. I have repented—oh, most bitterly! You too—you have repented?

JUDAH. No, I cannot. The oath I took that night has burnt into me. Every fibre of me is a lie! [VASHTI *tears herself away from him with a cry; bursts into tears.* JUDAH *rises, goes to her.*] What is it? What now?

VASHTI. Oh, I have ruined you forever. You were the best, the most honourable man on earth. You were truth itself, and I have dragged you down to me. How can you love me?

JUDAH. [*Very tenderly.*] How can I not love you? [VASHTI *bursts into tears, turns and buries her head in his arms. He folds her most tenderly to him; she is sobbing in his arms.*] Hush! hush! Hold fast to me! We're shipwrecked together. If we find land, we'll find it together. If we perish, we'll perish together! Either way you are mine!

There's nothing else much matters! Don't blame yourself. All is as it should be. You're mine; there's nothing I would change. [*Kisses her. Pause.*

Enter JOPP, *shown in by* ROPER.

ROPER. I'll tell his lordship you're here, sir.

[*Exit by window.*

[JUDAH *and* VASHTI *show surprise and some degree of alarm.*

JOPP. Good-morning, Mr. Llewellyn. [*He advances to* JUDAH, *holds out his hand;* JUDAH *will not take it.*] No? I'm your friend. You don't believe me? [*Looking at* VASHTI.] I told Miss Dethic I was her friend once; she wouldn't believe me; and yet she'd have been wise to make me her friend.

VASHTI. Aren't you my friend now?

JOPP. [*Pause. Looks at her; then a direct*—] No, I'm not.

VASHTI. [*Alarmed.*] Why have you come to Asgarby?

JOPP. I always spend a few weeks with Lord Asgarby at this time of the year.

VASHTI. But you were not expected.

JOPP. No; the fact is I have a little business with Lord Asgarby and—[*Looking at* JUDAH]—and with Mr. Llewellyn too. May I be so ungallant as to ask you to leave us?

JUDAH. You can speak to me before Miss Dethic. [*Takes her hand.*] I have no business with any one that she has not a right to hear.

JOPP. I must speak to you alone.

JUDAH. I will not hear. [*Turns away to window.*]

VASHTI. [*Intercepting* JUDAH.] Yes, yes; please, please, hear what he has to say; I'll go. [*Showing great alarm; goes to window; stops; comes down to* JOPP *very anxiously.*] This business that has brought you to Asgarby so suddenly—is it about me?

JOPP. [*Pause. Looks at her.*] Yes. [VASHTI *makes a gesture of alarm;* JUDAH *reassures her, and then goes with her to window. Exit* VASHTI. *Pause.* JUDAH *comes down to* JOPP. *To* JUDAH, *holding out his hand.*] Come; give me your hand. I tell you I'm your friend.

JUDAH. [*Will not take it.*] When I've heard what you have to say.

JOPP. Very well; very well. You're going to marry that young lady?

JUDAH. Next Thursday.

JOPP. [*Looks kindly at* JUDAH *again.*] When I was in practice, I had to cauterize a young labourer who had been bitten by a mad dog—a fine, sturdy young fellow with a very limited vocabulary. He swore at me fearfully at the time, but he thanked me afterwards.

JUDAH. Well?

JOPP. I'm going to cauterize you.

JUDAH. Go on.

JOPP. [*Puts his hand affectionately on* JUDAH'S *shoulder.*] My lad, I haven't seen you for a year.

But I wouldn't say I'm not just a little fond of you. I know the value of such men as you. It is the man who believes in something, believes in himself, believes in his fellow men, in the woman he loves, in the faith his fathers have taught him—that's the man that's good for something in this world. [*Dryly.*] I don't believe in anything myself, so I'm good for nothing. [JUDAH *moves uneasily away from him.*] Don't move away from me. I'm determined to be your friend.

JUDAH. Say what you have to say.

JOPP. You believe in this Miss Dethic. I knew you were mistaken a year ago. I tried all I could to open your eyes then, but she was too many for us. I knew very well all the while she was deceiving Lord Asgarby, deceiving Lady Eve, deceiving you.

JUDAH. She was not deceiving me.

JOPP. My dear sir, you were blind—although you know, that night here, for a moment I was disposed to think that you might be aiding her in her lies.

JUDAH. You thought that?

JOPP. Forgive me; it was only for a moment. I don't mind telling you that, if she was foolish enough to play her tricks again, I would let you be her keeper, and I would believe your word as easily as I would disbelieve her oath.

JUDAH. Indeed! Yet she is as truthful as I am.

JOPP. Tut, tut! You've got a fine career before

you ; I don't want to see you throw it away. This woman is an impostor. I can prove it ; all the country shall ring with it, and in a week to-day, if she is in England at all, she shall be in prison.

JUDAH. You'll prove her an impostor? How?

JOPP. There is but one key to those tower rooms.

JUDAH. Which was in your daughter's keeping.

JOPP. Mr. Dethic had another key made. I've got the locksmith who made it for him. He's waiting for me at the Asgarby Arms now. I have had detectives at work for months. I've fished out all the past history of these Dethics, and they cannot escape me. As soon as I have seen Lord Asgarby I bring my man up from the village and prove it.

JUDAH. [*Pause. Looking at* JOPP *for some seconds, then calmly.*] Bring him.

JOPP. You will marry Miss Dethic next Thursday.

JUDAH. Yes.

JOPP. Are you mad? Her character is lost! The man who marries her will be utterly ruined for life.

JUDAH. I am that man! Prove your worst against her. Write "Liar" on her forehead, make her name a byword all over England, hunt her to shame, to prison, to another country, I'm her partner! I love her! There's no locksmith living can put bars between her and me, and the sword was

never forged that can divide us in twain. Do your worst! To-morrow she shall be my wife.

[*Exit after* VASHTI *by window.*

JOPP. [*Looking after him.*] That's a splendid—fool! [*Pause.*] Well, never again while this world wags will I permit myself the luxury of any interference with its love affairs.

JUXON *enters at window, followed by* SOPHIE. SOPHIE *crosses behind and sits in armchair.*

JUXON. Good-morning, Jopp. How d'ye do?

[*Holds out his hand very limply and feebly.*

JOPP. [*Shaking hands.*] Good-morning, Mr. Prall. How are you?

JUXON. I regret I am in a very low condition of health. [*Crosses to armchair and sits.*

JOPP. How's that?

JUXON. I do not choose to expose the infirmity of those who by some curious stroke of irony stand to me in the relation of father and mother, but their fatuous imbecility—I can really call it by no other name—has at last assumed such colossal proportions, that companionship with them is impossible to me. I cannot remain any longer under the same roof with them. It is positively sapping my vitality.

JOPP. You don't say so?

JUXON. I assure you, Jopp, the constant endeavour for the last six months to root out from my father's mind the pernicious doctrines of protection

and reciprocity has been nothing less than martyrdom to me—martyrdom !

[*Wiping his forehead in an agony of recollection.*

JOPP. [*Good-humouredly.*] Give him up as a bad job.

JUXON. I really must. In fact, it is with that view that—[*Glancing at* SOPHIE.]—I have approached Miss Jopp with overtures—[*Glancing a little nervously at her.*] Have I not ?

SOPHIE. [*Looking straight at her father.*] Mr. Prall and I intend to marry shortly, father.

JOPP. [*Jumps up from his seat.*] What the dev—what ?

SOPHIE. My dear father, pray control yourself. There is surely no reason for any intemperance of speech or feeling ! Juxon and I have thoroughly made up our minds. [*Looking at him very firmly and straight, with great determination.*] You surely don't propose to offer any resistance.

JOPP. [*Looks at them both for a few moments ; sees she is determined.*] No. [*Sits down.*

SOPHIE. [*Sweetly.*] Thank you. Then we needn't remind you that we are considerably over twenty-one.

JOPP. [*Sitting serenely, drops into a good-humoured, indifferent, ironic tone.*] Been engaged long ?

SOPHIE. Nearly twelve months.

JOPP. Got anything to marry on ?

SOPHIE. Nothing definite, at present.

JOPP. How are you going to live ?

JUXON. I have various things in contemplation.

JOPP. What in particular?

JUXON. When I was making arrangements for my cremation the other day, the post of curator to the new cremation museum was offered to me, with a free residence overlooking the present Necropolis. I need hardly say the cremation of—er—other people would be a superlatively congenial occupation to me.

JOPP. Then why didn't you take it?

JUXON. The salary was so deplorably insufficient.

JOPP. Anything else in view?

JUXON. My father is remarkably well off.

JOPP. Well, won't he do something for you?

JUXON. [*To* JOPP.] Another bitter stroke of irony is that the entire result of my six months' incessant argument with him on the science of political economy has been the destruction of a will in which he left me half his property, which is now made over to institutions whose very existence I have again and again warned him are plague-spots on society.

JOPP. [*Begins very solemnly.*] Young man. [*Stops. Aside.*] No; why should I? [*Turns to* SOPHIE.] Sophie, you've quite made up your mind to marry this gentleman?

SOPHIE. My dear father, you cannot suppose that in a matter of such importance as marriage I should

have spoken before I *had* made up my mind, or that I should suffer any interference from a third person.

JOPP. [*Shrugs his shoulders; calmly accepts the situation.*] All right. [*To* JUXON, *very solemnly.*] Young man, I cannot make the least provision for my daughter; therefore will you do me a favour?

JUXON. Certainly, if it doesn't involve any sacrifice of principle.

JOPP. Would you oblige me by immediately adopting your father's views on political economy?

JUXON. [*Shakes his head obstinately.*] I really can't do that—I can't indeed; but—

JOPP. But what?

JUXON. But. [*Looking off.*] Here are my father and mother coming. Sophie has told me what you have discovered about this Miss Dethic and her father.

JOPP. Indeed! Sophie has told you—

JUXON. Everything. If you would consent to let them leave Asgarby without any public exposure, I think I could so arrange matters with my father that he would make ample provision for my future.

JOPP. What do you mean?

JUXON. Will you allow me a few minutes' conversation with my father? I will make my proposals to him, and bring them to you and Miss Jopp afterwards. Will you permit me?

JOPP. You will not commit me to any course of action?

JUXON. Not in the least.

JOPP. Come along, Sophie.

[*Exit at door.* SOPHIE *rises and follows him. As they go off, enter* MR. *and* MRS. PRALL *by window.*

PRALL. There! Those Jopps are here again!

MRS. P. Yes, that was surely that dreadful young person. [*Looking after* SOPHIE.

JUXON. My dear mother, will you oblige me by refraining from comments on Miss Jopp?

MRS. P. I never met with a more disagreeable girl in my life. I'm sure the minx knows all sorts of horrid things that she shouldn't.

JUXON. [*With his sickly smile of superiority.*] I have myself directed Miss Jopp's studies, and I believe I am acquainted with the nature and extent of her knowledge on all subjects.

MRS. P. I am ashamed of you, Juxon, to encourage an unmarried woman in those dreadful investigations.

JUXON. She did not require any encouragement.

MRS. P. I dare say not.

JUXON. So far as I can judge, the young women of the present day are lamentably ignorant; they may be said to know next to nothing.

PRALL. Oh, don't they? [*Looking at newspaper.*

JUXON. [*Continuing with his sickly smile.*] I have trained Miss Jopp with the view of making her a fit companion for life.

PRALL. Companion for life—for whom?

JUXON. For me, or for some man of equal intellectual breadth and vigour.

PRALL. Oh! and is it to be you or the other man?

JUXON. It is to be distinctly me. We marry as soon as possible.

PRALL. And how do you mean to live?

JUXON. My dear sir—[*Approaching* PRALL]—seeing that you are responsible for bringing me into existence, I think I may very fitly address that question to you. How am I to live? Of course—[*With a sickly smile of superiority*]—with such literary and scientific attainments as mine, we couldn't possibly starve.

PRALL. Oh, couldn't you? You try!

[*Turns away and sits in armchair.*

JUXON. But with your large fortune it is incontestably your duty—I say it is your duty—to provide for me in a suitable manner.

PRALL. I have already disposed of my fortune between your brother Jim and charities.

JUXON. I beg you will reconsider the matter, sir; as if I am thrown on my own resources I shall be compelled to act in a manner that would be extremely disagreeable to you.

PRALL. Oh, how, sir?

JUXON. Jopp and I have discovered the whole history of these Dethics. The man was a professional conjurer—Professor Janus, the Wizard of the

East. We have also discovered the locksmith who made the key of the tower rooms for Mr. Dethic; we have, in fact, the most complete evidence of the whole imposture.

PRALL. [*Taken aback.*] Oh! And what do you mean to do?

JUXON. I shall firstly write a letter to the *Times*, explaining how your peculiarly illogical intellect rendered you an easy victim; I shall then deal with the matter in the reviews and magazines; and, finally, I shall begin my long-contemplated work, "The History of Dupes," in which I shall deal at length with you as the most notorious example of credulity known in this century. In the mean time Professor Jopp will have made a public exposure of the girl and her father.

PRALL. [*Completely overcome.*] Oh! You are going to do this—when?

JUXON. I shall write to the *Times* to-morrow, unless—

PRALL. Unless what?

JUXON. Unless you relieve me of the necessity of providing for my future. In that case I should persuade Jopp to let them off, and I should refrain from writing my history of your delusions. Weigh the matter carefully and let me know. I wish to spare you.

[*Goes up to table, takes hat and stick.*

PRALL. [*Seated.*] How much per annum would you take?

JUXON. Sufficient to pursue my studies, and to provide me with a comfortable home at—at some distance from your residence. [*Stops; speaks with great authority.*] Understand me: if I persuade Jopp to allow this affair to blow over, I must not be held to condone the mistakes and misrepresentations in your book. [*Goes a step or two further; then stops again.*] Nor do I acquiesce in your monstrous theories of reciprocity and protection. [*Stopping at door, very dictatorially.*] Understand that clearly! [*Exit.*

PRALL. I wish I had sent that boy to sea instead of his brother Jim.

MRS. P. Jim was never intellectual.

PRALL. No, thank Heaven. What's to be done? If there's a public exposure, what will become of my book?

MRS. P. You've said nothing in it that isn't true.

PRALL. No—at least, of course if Jopp has been inquiring, there's no telling what construction may be put upon my truths.

MRS. P. Nobody shall ever make me believe the girl's an impostor. James, whatever you do, don't you withdraw your book from circulation.

PRALL. [*Firmly.*] I won't. After all, the public is the best judge. They like it, and there's a new edition just coming out.

MRS. P. I wouldn't alter a single line.

PRALL. [*Positively.*] I won't!

MRS. P. Whatever you have once asserted, never retract it.

PRALL. [*Same tone.*] I won't.

MRS. P. And if there are any truths that are at all doubtful, I should make them very emphatic.

PRALL. I will—I will—only—[*Uneasily*]—if Juxon writes to the *Times*, and Jopp proves the girl's an impostor, it may place my truths in a very awkward light.

MRS. PRALL. Never mind. Repeat them over and over again, and in the end some one will believe them.

PRALL. [*Anxiously.*] Yes; but it's very extraordinary how many truths can be disproved, you know; and if there's a great public scandal,—Caroline, for the sake of keeping my truths untampered with, I shall make Juxon that allowance.

[*Exeunt by window.*

Enter LORD A. *and* JOPP.

LORD A. My dear Jopp, this is a most welcome surprise. You are going to stay, of course?

JOPP. No, I've come on business. You have still got those Dethics here?

LORD A. Yes. I've kept my promise to the girl. I'm building a new church for Mr. Llewellyn, and endowing it. The deeds are to be signed this morning.

JOPP. Then I've come just in time. You must go no further, Asgarby. I have the whole history

of these people. I can prove the father an impostor his whole life through.

LORD A. Of course he's an impostor; but Eve loves the girl, and has made me promise to make her a settlement on her marriage, and—blame me if you like, Jopp—I know I'm being duped—I know I'm a coward, and a fool perhaps—but I can't deny Eve anything. When I think she is the last of us, and in a few years I may be left alone—

[*Breaks down; turns away; hides his head.*

LADY EVE *runs on.*

LADY E. Oh, here you are, Professor Jopp. Sophie told me you were come. You're just in time.

JOPP. What for, Lady Eve?

LADY E. To play the hypocrite for once, will you?

JOPP. Certainly, if you will coach me.

LADY E. Well, first of all you are to say that I am quite well and strong. What's the matter, father?

LORD A. Nothing, Eve, nothing!

LADY E. Tears! [*To* JOPP.] You've been telling him I shall die.

JOPP. No, Lady Eve.

LADY E. Well, perhaps I shall; but not yet, not while my dear Vashti is near me to keep me alive. [JOPP *laughs.*] You're not to laugh, Professor Jopp. It's true! Come, father; they are all in the library, and the deeds are ready. Where shall we sign them?

LORD A. It doesn't matter; anywhere.

LADY E. Then let us sign them here—here where I first saw Vashti; and—[*To* JOPP]—you shall be a witness, will you? [*Coaxingly.*] Just to please me.

JOPP. To please you, Lady Eve, I'd witness anything.

LADY E. I know you are laughing up your sleeve.

JOPP. No, no, Lady Eve.

LADY E. Yes. You think it's all moonshine, don't you?

JOPP. Certainly not.

LADY E. Yes, you do. I've read your books. But what's the use?

JOPP. The use of what?

LADY E. Of proving all the fairy tales are false; it only makes the children unhappy.

JOPP. [*Taking her hands very tenderly.*] And the grown-up people too. [*Exit* LADY EVE.

LORD A. [*Goes up to him very anxiously.*] What do you think of her?

JOPP. She's certainly better.

LORD A. You own it. And she will get well? There's a chance of her living to old age? Tell me!

JOPP. [*Very quietly.*] My dear Asgarby, she may live some years, but she will not live to old age.

LORD A. Till womanhood?

JOPP. Over the threshold, perhaps.

LORD A. And, knowing that she cannot live longer, you ask me to thwart her—to send this Miss

Dethic away? My dear Jopp, you say you have fresh evidence against these people— [*Action of remonstrance from* JOPP.] I don't want to hear it. They will not live at the castle after next week— [*Gesture of remonstrance from* JOPP.] Let me go on now. I can't help it, Jopp—I know it's only superstition; I know there's no reason for it, but I feel that somehow Eve's life does depend on Miss Dethic— [*Action of remonstrance from* JOPP.] At any rate, you can see that it would be dangerous to Eve to part them.

JOPP. Yes, there would be a danger to Eve.

LORD A. Then for her sake you will spare them, and say nothing of what you know?

JOPP. [*After a pause.*] Yes, Asgarby, I'll spare them. [*Offers hand.*

LORD A. [*Shakes his hand heartily.*] Thank you, Jopp, thank you. I'll just go and see where these people are, and we will get the deeds signed as soon as possible. [*Exit.*

JOPP. [*Alone.*] After all, why not believe the fairy tales? Why not pretend there is a dryad in every tree, and a nymph in every brook? Nymphs and dryads may be as good names for the great secret as germ-plasms and protoplasms. Perhaps there is no great secret after all. [*Looking off.*] Here comes that infernal scoundrel! So I shall be obliged to let you and your precious daughter off after all, shall I?

Enter DETHIC *at window, affable, serene, cheerful as usual.*

DETHIC. [*Holding out his hand.*] Ah, how do you do, my dear professor?

JOPP. How do *you* do, my dear *professor?*

DETHIC. [*Slightly alarmed.*] Professor?

JOPP. A title I share with you. I am professor of biology; you are professor of the art of making plum-puddings in other people's hats, and conveying other people's watches and coins from their pockets into yours. [DETHIC *looks ghastly.* JOPP *glances at his own watch-chain; handles it.*] Don't be alarmed! I'm sure you wouldn't practise on a brother professor.

DETHIC. [*Frightened, but screwing up his courage as far as possible.*] I think you are mistaking me for—

JOPP. Some other *professor*? No, professor, I'm not. Come, own up, Professor *Janus.* [*Winks at him good-humouredly.*] What made you give up the conjuring business, eh?

DETHIC. [*Pause.*] Well, it didn't pay.

JOPP. Ah! then you had to turn your attention to something else.

DETHIC. [*Trying to brazen it out.*] Look here, let's understand one another, professor.

JOPP. Just so, *professor*, let us.

DETHIC. [*Very firmly.*] Because I am a conjurer is no reason that I'm not an honest man.

JOPP. No, there must be some other reason for that.

DETHIC. Eh?

JOPP. What made you take the name of Dethic?

DETHIC. Well, I had to take some name, and I —I thought Dethic was a very good one.

JOPP. Capital name! [*Comes up to him; winks at him again. Very good-humoured, very quiet, coaxing tone.*] How did you manage to get the food to her for the first twelve days, eh?

DETHIC. [*Loud—angry.*] How dare you infer —how dare you infer—

JOPP. [*Very quiet and good-tempered.*] Come, come, no secrets from a brother professor, you know. Besides—[*Quiet, genial whisper.*]—I've got the man who made you the key.

DETHIC. [*Turns very pale.*] No!

JOPP. Yes, I have. Tozer, you know.

DETHIC. Got him—where?

JOPP. He's here in the village.

DETHIC. [*Collapses. Very humbly.*] Oh, professor, you won't be hard on—on—

JOPP. On a brother professor? No. I'm going to let you and your daughter off scot-free.

DETHIC. [*Overjoyed.*] What! You are! Upon my word you're really the noblest man I ever met in all my life. [*Very heartily.*

JOPP. On one condition.

DETHIC. Anything—anything. I accept it, what-

ever it is. I'm so grateful to you there's nothing I wouldn't do for you.

JOPP. You sail straight away to-morrow for America or Australia. P 0 / 2

DETHIC. Either! America or Australia, whichever you please—it's immaterial. Anything else, professor?

JOPP. You stay there for the rest of your life.

DETHIC. I will. I give you my word of honour I will. Anything else, professor?

JOPP. Yes. As I am deprived of the pleasure of dusting your jacket in public, I really must indulge myself in the luxury of telling you in private that you are one of the most rascally humbugs, impostors, liars, thieves, and swindlers that I have ever met! And you may thank your lucky stars that the state of Lady Eve's health doesn't allow me to expose you as you deserve, you blackguard.

[*Very passionately.*

DETHIC. [*Takes it very calmly. After a pause.*] Anything else, professor?

JOPP. Nothing else, *professor*.

DETHIC. Then I suppose I may take the liberty of saying *au revoir*.

JOPP. You may take the further liberty of saying adieu.

DETHIC. I will. Adieu, professor. [*Exit.*

Enter JUDAH *at window.*

JUDAH. [*Intensely calm.*] Lord Asgarby asked me to wait for him here.

JOPP. He is in the next room, I believe. [JUDAH *turns up stage ; stands for a moment back to audience. Aside.*] He's a good fellow, and he loves her. I'm glad it's to be hushed up. Mr. Llewellyn ! [JUDAH *turns round, intensely calm.*] I find I am mistaken about Miss Dethic.

JUDAH. Mistaken !

JOPP. I have no evidence against her. I wish you and your bride a happy future.

JUDAH. [*Calm, dreamy, absorbed.*] Yes, our future will be happy.

JOPP. You have every reason to think so. Mr. Dethic will leave the country, and you will begin your new life without a cloud.

JUDAH. Yes. Without a cloud !

JOPP. [*Aside.*] He's not listening to me. [*Aloud.*] I say that, so far as I am concerned, Miss Dethic will be quite safe.

JUDAH. Thank you. Yes, she will be quite safe.

JOPP. After all, there's not one of us that dares to have all his life stripped bare.

JUDAH. [*Turns and looks at him.*] You think not ? Do you suppose there is anything in my past life I would not show to you and to all the world, when it is already known where no secrets can be hidden ?

JOPP. You are lucky if you have no such secrets, Mr. Llewellyn.

JUDAH. I have none. I have nothing that I dare to hide.

JOPP. I congratulate you.

LORD A. *enters, followed by* MR. *and* MRS. PRALL.

LORD A. Ah! [*Calling off.*] Will you all come this way, please?

Enter MORSON *and* GRANGER *with papers, followed by* PAPWORTHY *and two other* TRUSTEES.

LORD A. Now, Granger, the deeds of gift. [GRANGER *gives him deed.*] And, Morson, will you bring the plans of the new building? Where is Miss Dethic?

JUDAH. She is waiting on the terrace outside. I'll fetch her.

[*Exit* JUDAH. *He returns in a few minutes with* VASHTI, *who is deeply affected, trembling, ashamed.*

LORD A. Papworthy, I shall want you and your brother trustees to execute the deed. Is it all prepared?

PAP. Everything. There is nothing to do but to sign.

Enter JUDAH *and* VASHTI.

JUDAH. [*Speaking in a low tone to her.*] Have courage! It will soon be over.

LORD A. Miss Dethic, Mr. Llewellyn, I have to beg your acceptance of a marriage present from Lady Eve and myself—the grounds on which your present church is built, £20,000 for rebuilding it

according to the plans that Mr. Morson has prepared, and an endowment for the living while you shall be its minister. Will you look over the deed? [*Giving it to him.*] Lady Eve will be here in a minute.

JUDAH. Miss Dethic has something to say first. [*To* VASHTI.] Speak! Don't be afraid. A few bold words and all is over. Speak! I am beside you. Nothing can harm you—speak! [*Pause.*

VASHTI. [*Bowed with shame, speaks in a low, ashamed voice.*] Lord Asgarby, you do not know me. I have deceived you and Lady Eve. I came into your house to deceive you—I have deceived all who believe in me. I have no supernatural powers. It has been all a pretence—a falsehood from beginning to end. [*Turns to* JUDAH.] I have said it—now let me go.

JUDAH. [*Taking her hand.*] Stay! I have my share of the burden to bear.

VASHTI. No, no! You shall not! Why should you sacrifice yourself? Lord Asgarby, do not hear him. It was his love for me that blinded him. He is worthy of your gift and of your friendship. Give them to him, and—think no more of me.

JUDAH. No, your guilt is mine. I claim my share of it. [*To* JOPP.] Put the oath to me again that you put that night.

JOPP. What do you mean?

JUDAH. Ask me if I knew her deceit—if I helped her to deceive. Do you hear? Quick! I can't

sleep at nights. I've not had one moment's rest since. My food is bitter! My conscience burns me! Oh, quench this fire! Do you hear? Put me to my oath.

JOPP. Is it possible!

JUDAH. You won't? Then hear me, hear me, all of you! I lied! I lied! Take back my false oath; let the truth return to my lips! Let my heart find peace, and my eyelids sleep again! You all know me now for what I am; let all who honoured me and followed me know me too. Hide nothing! Let it be blazed about the city. [*Pause. To* LORD A.] Take back your gift. [*Gives deed to* LORD A.] We will take nothing from you! Nothing! Nothing! [*Goes to* VASHTI.] It's done! [*Takes her hand.*] Our path is straight now; we can walk safely all our lives. [*Taking her up stage.*

LORD A. But your future—what will you do?

JUDAH. Leave this place, and work out our repentance together in some place where we are not known.

JOPP. No, Mr. Llewellyn. You have conquered yourself. Stay here, live down your fault, amongst the people whom you have deceived. You shall have one true friend as often as I am here.

LORD A. And you shall have another friend in me.

JUDAH. Vashti, dare you stay here? dare you face those who know you?

VASHTI. [*Looking at him.*] With you, yes.

JUDAH. Let it be so. But I am not fit to lead. I resign my ministry, but we'll stay here and win back the trust and the respect of those who know us.

JOPP. Bravo!

LADY EVE *runs on.*

LADY E. [*Comes down to* VASHTI.] Why didn't you tell me you were ready? Where are the deeds? Are they signed?

JUDAH. No, Lady Eve; there was a mistake in the title-deeds. The building-stones were not sound. There is to be no new church. [LADY EVE *shows great disappointment.*] Yes, we will build our new church with our lives, and its foundation shall be the truth.

CURTAIN.

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